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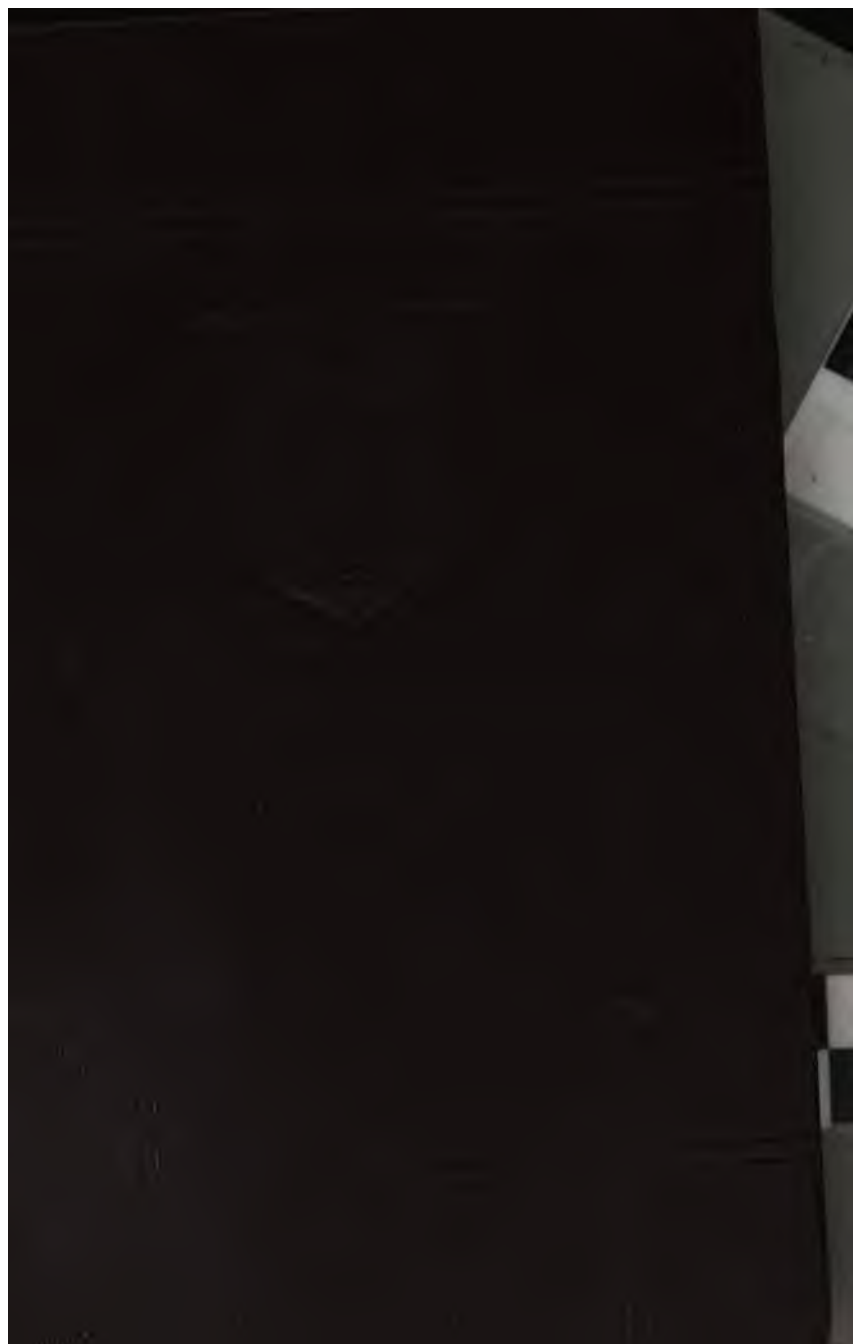
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At the feet of Marie Antoinette.

THE ROMANCES OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE

Volume Three

The Marie Antoinette Romances, *v. 7*

McCLURE BOOK CO.
NEW YORK

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At the feet of Marie Antoinette.

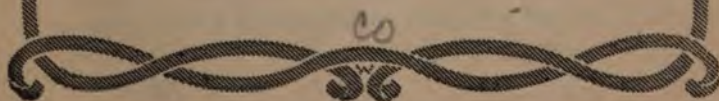
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CHAPTER XXI.

THE RECEIPT AND THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

THE result of that nocturnal visit to Reteau de Villette appeared on the next day. At seven o'clock in the morning Madame de La Motte sent the queen a letter containing the jeweller's receipt in the following words : —

We the undersigned acknowledge the receipt of a diamond necklace which had been sold to the queen for sixteen hundred thousand francs, the diamonds failing to suit her Majesty, who has recompensed us for our trouble and outlay by leaving in our hands the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, previously paid.

BOEHMER AND BOSSANGE.

The queen, at length easy in mind concerning an affair which had given her so much trouble, put the receipt in a drawer, and dismissed the subject from her thoughts.

But, in singular incongruity with this receipt, the jewellers were visited two days later by Cardinal de Rohan, who was still anxious concerning the first payment agreed upon between the jewellers and the queen. He found Boehmer at home. Had there been any failure of payment, any delay or refusal, the camp of the jewellers should show signs of alarm. On the contrary everything indicated quiet and security ; and Boehmer received his illustrious patron with effusive demonstrations of pleasure.

"Well," said the cardinal, "to-day is the day appointed for the first payment ; the queen has paid you, then ?"

"No, Monseigneur; the queen has not been able to give us any money. You know that Monsieur de Calonne was refused by the king. Every one is talking of it."

"Yes, every one is talking of it, Boehmer; and it is that refusal which brings me here to-day."

"But," continued the jeweller, "her Majesty is very kind; she has guaranteed the debt, and we have no more to ask."

"Ah, so much the better!" cried the cardinal; "guaranteed the debt, you say? Very good; but in what manner?"

"In the most simple and delicate manner," replied the jeweller, — "a manner altogether royal."

"Through the mediation of that bright countess, perhaps?"

"No, Monseigneur, no. Madame de La Motte does not appear in the matter; and this has seemed to us very flattering."

"The countess does not appear? You may believe, however, that she has had to do with the affair, Monsieur Boehmer. Every wise suggestion must have come from her, — I do not intend disparagement of her Majesty, you understand."

"Monseigneur can judge whether her Majesty has been considerate toward us. When the rumor reached us that the king had rejected the order for five hundred thousand francs we wrote to Madame de La Motte."

"When was that?"

"Yesterday, Monseigneur."

"What did she reply?"

"Your Eminence knows nothing about it?" asked Boehmer, with a slight degree of respectful familiarity.

"No; it is three days since I had the honor of seeing the countess."

"Well, Monseigneur, Madame de La Motte responded with a single word, — 'Wait!'"

"In writing?"

"No, Monseigneur, orally. In our letter we begged Madame de La Motte to ask you for an audience, and to warn the queen that the payment was nearly due."

"The word 'wait' was very natural."

"We therefore waited, Monseigneur; and last evening we received by a mysterious courier a letter from the queen."

"A letter? — to you, Boehmer?"

"Or rather an acknowledgment in the proper form, Monseigneur."

"Let me see it," said the cardinal.

"Oh, I would show it to you if we had not sworn to let no one see it."

"And why?"

"Because this reserve is imposed on us by the queen herself, Monseigneur."

"Ah, that is another matter! You are very fortunate, you jewellers, to have letters from the queen."

"For thirteen hundred and fifty thousand francs, Monseigneur," said the jeweller, with a grin, "one may have —"

"Ten millions, a hundred millions, would not pay for some things, Monsieur," replied the prelate, in a severe tone. "In short, then, you have a good guarantee?"

"The best possible, Monseigneur."

"The queen acknowledges the debt?"

"In due form."

"And engages to pay —"

"In three months five hundred thousand francs; and the balance in six."

"And — the interest?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, a single word from her Majesty makes that secure. 'Let us settle this matter,' her Majesty graciously adds, 'between ourselves.' Your Excellency will understand the meaning of that request. 'You will have no reason for regret.' This is over her signature. Therefore, you see, Monseigneur, that from this moment the transaction is, to my partner and myself, an affair of honor."

"Then I am entirely out of your debt, Monsieur Boehmer," said the cardinal, much pleased. "May we soon have business together again."

"Whenever your Eminence may deign to honor us with your confidence."

"But you must notice still in this affair the hand of that amiable countess!"

"We are very grateful to Madame de La Motte, Monseigneur; and it has been agreed between my partner and myself that we will acknowledge her kindness when the full payment for the necklace shall have put us in possession of ready money."

"Hush, hush!" said the cardinal; "you misunderstand me." He returned to his carriage attended by manifestations of respect from all in the house.

We may now lift the mask. The statue is unveiled to all eyes. All our readers understood what plot Jeanne de La Motte was meditating against her benefactress, on seeing her borrow the pen of Reteau de Villette. There was no longer any anxiety in the minds of the jewellers; no more scruples troubled the queen; no uncertainty remained to the cardinal. Three months remained for the perpetration of the theft and the crime; in those three months the ill-omened fruitage would be so far matured that it might be plucked by the felonious hand.

Jeanne paid a visit to the cardinal, who asked her how

the queen had contrived to allay so completely the jewellers' eagerness for their money. She replied that the queen had treated with the jewellers confidentially, and had enjoined them to secrecy; that if the queen had paid ready money she would even then have had to exercise too much concealment. But still more was necessary to her since she had bought on credit.

The cardinal assented to this view of the matter, and asked whether the queen was mindful of his good intentions. Thereupon Jeanne drew such a picture of the queen's gratitude that Monsieur de Rohan was enthusiastic, — much more as a man of gallantry than as a subject, more exalted in his pride than in his devotion.

Jeanne, having brought the conversation to a satisfactory conclusion, returned home, and proceeded to execute the plan she had formed. She had resolved to negotiate with some dealer in precious stones the sale of diamonds to the amount of three hundred thousand francs, and then go to England or to Russia, where she could live sumptuously on that sum for five or six years; and at the end of that time she could with less danger begin to sell one by one the remainder of the diamonds. But the event was not in accordance with her wishes. On her first exhibition of diamonds to two experts she was alarmed by their surprise and reserve. One of them offered her a contemptible price; and the other went into ecstasies over the stones, saying he had never seen any equal to them except on Boehmer's necklace.

Jeanne halted. Had she gone a step farther she would have betrayed herself. She understood that imprudence in such a matter meant ruin, and that ruin meant the pillory and perpetual imprisonment. She put the diamonds under lock and key, in the most secret of her hiding-places, and resolved to provide herself with weapons of

defence so strong, and offensive arms so sharp, that in case of war they who should come to the encounter would be vanquished in advance.

To have to steer between the curiosity of the cardinal, who would want to know everything, and the indiscretion of the queen, who would be always ready to boast of having refused the necklace, was to be exposed to a terrible danger. A word exchanged between the queen and the cardinal, and all would be discovered. Jeanne comforted herself with the reflection that the cardinal, being in love with the queen, wore a bandage over his eyes, like all other lovers, and consequently would readily fall into any snare which cunning might lay for him, addressed to his love. But this snare must be contrived by a skilful hand, and in such a manner as to entrap both the interested parties. It must be so contrived that in case the queen should discover the theft she would not dare to complain, and that if the cardinal made the discovery he would see that a single word would destroy him. She had to play a master-stroke against two adversaries who would have all the spectators in their favor.

Jeanne did not draw back. Hers was one of those intrepid natures which push evil to heroism, and good to evil. From this time her mind was occupied by a single thought, — how to prevent an interview between the queen and the cardinal. So long as she, Jeanne, was between them all was safe; but if in her absence they should exchange a word, Jeanne's fortune would tumble into ruin.

"They must never meet," she said, — "never! But the cardinal will wish to see the queen; he will endeavor to do so. Let us not wait for him to make the attempt; let us inspire him with the idea. Let him wish to see her; let him demand to see her, — but in such a way

that he will be compromised. Yes, but if he only is compromised?" This thought threw her into a painful perplexity. "He alone being compromised, the queen has her remedy. The queen speaks loud; she knows so well how to tear the mask from the face of an impostor.

"What is to be done? That the queen may not be able to accuse, it is necessary that she shall be unable to speak; to close that noble and courageous mouth, its springs must be compressed by the initiative of an accusation. For that man dare not, before a tribunal, accuse his valet of theft, who could be convicted by his valet of a crime as dishonorable. Let Monsieur de Rohan be compromised in relation to the queen, and it is almost certain that the queen will be compromised too. But those two persons interested to discover the secret must not come together by chance."

Jeanne recoiled at first in view of the immensity of the rock suspended over her head. Could she live thus, agitated, terrified, always dreading its fall? How, then, could she escape from the danger? By flight; by exile; by carrying to a foreign land the diamonds of the queen's necklace? Flight would be easy enough. In ten hours, in a good carriage, she would be secure. But what scandal! what disgrace! She would be no longer a woman of rank, but a thief; in safety, but proscribed, — a fugitive whom justice cannot reach, but whom justice can point out; whom the executioner's red-hot iron cannot brand, but whom public opinion breaks in pieces and devours. No, she will not flee. She will be bold and remain. This resolution was confirmed in her mind when she had imagined the possibility of creating between the queen and the cardinal a bond of fear against the day when either of them should discover that a theft had been committed.

Jeanne had calculated how much money she would be likely to gain in two years from the queen's favor and the cardinal's love. She had estimated the revenue from these two sources at five or six hundred thousand francs ; after which weariness, disgrace, abandonment, would come to off-set the favor, the confidence, and the influence she had possessed. "By my plan," she said to herself, "I shall gain seven or eight hundred thousand francs."

One may see how Jeanne, notwithstanding her profound intelligence, entered upon the tortuous road which would terminate in disgrace for her, in despair for the others.

"I will remain in Paris," the countess resumed. "I will witness calmly all the play of the two actors, and will permit them to play only in rôles favorable to my interests. I can then select the most favorable opportunity for flight, whether it be some commission on the part of the queen, or her actual displeasure, which I may make a pretext for my departure. But the cardinal must hold no communication with Marie Antoinette. And here lies the great difficulty, for Monsieur de Rohan is in love, he is a prince, he has the privilege of visiting her Majesty several times a year ; and the queen, coquettish, eager for homage, and grateful toward the cardinal, will not avoid him if he tries to see her. As to the way in which these august personages may be kept apart, events will furnish it ; it is for me to aid events.

"Nothing could be so much to the purpose as to arouse in the queen that pride which is the crown of chastity. There can be no doubt that her fine and sensitive spirit would resent an advance a little too eager on the part of the cardinal. Natures like hers are fond of homage, but they suspect and repel attacks. Yes, the method is infallible. If Monsieur de Rohan can be persuaded to

declare himself freely, he will awaken in the mind of the queen a feeling of disgust, of antipathy, which will separate finally, not the prince from the princess, but the man from the woman, the male from the female. In that way arms will be furnished against the cardinal, which in the great day of battle will paralyze all his activities.

"So far, good. But now, again, in making the cardinal offensive to the queen I shall have acted against the cardinal only. The queen's virtue will be more conspicuous, she will be freed from all suspicion, and she will have gained that freedom of speech which facilitates accusations and lends to them the weight of authority.

"What is necessary, then, is a proof against Monsieur de Rohan and against the queen, — a two-edged sword which shall cut in both directions; an accusation which will make the queen turn pale, and will make the cardinal blush, and which, being accredited, will free from all suspicion Jeanne, the confidant of the two guilty principals. What is necessary is a combination behind which, when the occasion requires, Jeanne can intrench herself and say, 'Do not accuse me, or I will accuse you; do not destroy me, or I will destroy you. Leave me my fortune, and I will leave you your honor.' That is worth seeking for, and I will try to discover it. My time is paid for from this time forth."

Madame de La Motte drew her arm-chair to the window, illumined by the sun, buried herself in its soft cushions, and began her search.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRISONER.

DURING these meditations of the countess, a scene of a very different kind was taking place in the Rue Saint Claude, in a house opposite that inhabited by Jeanne.

It will be remembered that Cagliostro had established in Balsamo's old hôtel the fugitive Oliva, who was pursued by the police of Monsieur de Crosne. Mademoiselle Oliva, who had been in a state of great anxiety, had accepted with joy this opportunity to escape both the police and Beausire. She therefore lived retired, concealed, and trembling, in this mysterious dwelling which had been the scene of so many terrible dramas, — more terrible, alas, than the tragi-comic adventure of Mademoiselle Nicole Legay.

Cagliostro had provided most carefully for her comfort. It was very pleasant to her to be under the protection of that grand nobleman, who asked nothing of her, but who seemed to hope for much. "But what did he hope for?" she often asked herself in vain. To Mademoiselle Oliva, Monsieur de Cagliostro, the man who had overawed Beausire and triumphed over the agents of the police, was a benignant God. He was also very much in love, since he respected her. For Oliva's vanity led her to believe that Cagliostro intended some day to make her his mistress. It is a virtue, in the eyes of those women who no longer possess any, to be capable of inspiring a respectful love. That heart is indeed withered, arid, altogether dead, which

no longer hopes for love and the respect which goes with it. Therefore Oliva began to build castles in the air, in which, we must confess, poor Beausire very rarely had a place; and the two visits a week paid to her by Cagliostro were eagerly anticipated. At these visits Oliva, bedecked with the pretty things she found on her toilet-tables, assumed grand airs and played the fine lady.

In her fine salon, in the midst of real and refined luxury, the little creature, intoxicated with delight, acknowledged to herself that everything in her past life had been deception and error; that contrary to the assertion of the moralist, "Virtue makes happiness," it was happiness that invariably produced virtue. Unfortunately, there was lacking in the composition of this happiness one element indispensable to its continuance. Oliva was happy, but she was lonely. Books, pictures, musical instruments, were not sufficient to amuse her. The books were soon read through, — such as suited her taste, — and pictures and music afforded her no lasting satisfaction.

It must be admitted that very soon Oliva was heartily tired of her happiness, and began to regret her mornings passed at the windows of the Rue Dauphine, where she used to sit to attract the attention of the passers-by. And then those pleasant walks in the Saint Germain quarter, when, her coquettish shoe raised on heels two inches high, revealing a foot of voluptuous shape, each step of the lovely walker was a triumph, and drew from the admiring spectators little cries, either of fear when she slipped, or of pleasure when in addition to her foot she showed her ankle.

The imprisoned Nicole began to think of these things. It is true that the agents of the police were very formidable personages; that the Hospital, in which women pass their lives in a vile captivity, could not compare with the

ephemeral and splendid imprisonment of the Rue Saint Claude. But what availed it to be a woman, and to have the right to be capricious, if one could not sometimes rebel against the good and change it into evil, at least in imagination? Nicole, then, regretted her lost liberty, and in regretting her liberty began to long for Beausire.

We come now to a day of special grief and irritability, when Oliva, having been deprived of all society for two weeks, with nothing to engage her attention, entered upon a very gloomy season of ennui. Having exhausted all means of diversion, not daring to appear at the windows or to go out, she began to lose her appetite, — not, however, the appetite of the imagination, which, on the contrary, increased as the other diminished.

While she was in this state of moral agitation she received an unexpected visit from Cagliostro. He entered as usual by the lower door of the hôtel, and crossing the little garden recently laid out in the court-yard, knocked on the shutters of the apartment occupied by Oliva. Four knocks, at intervals agreed upon between them, were the signal for drawing the bolt which the young woman had thought necessary to demand as a safeguard against a visitor armed with keys.

On hearing Cagliostro's signal, she drew the bolt with a haste which showed her desire for a conference with him. Lively as a Parisian grisette, she rushed forward to meet her noble jailer, and in harsh, impatient tones cried out, "Monsieur, I wish you to know that I am homesick."

Cagliostro, turning his head slightly, looked at her. "You are homesick?" he said, closing the door; "that is a grievous malady."

"I am unhappy here. I shall die here."

"Really!"

"Yes; I have bad thoughts."

"There, there," said the count, quieting her as if she had been a pet spaniel; "if you are not comfortable in my house, do not blame me for it. Keep your anger for the lieutenant of police, who persecutes you."

"You exasperate me with your coolness, Monsieur," said Oliva. "I would rather you flew in a passion; you manage to pacify me, and that makes me mad with rage."

"Acknowledge, Mademoiselle, that you are unreasonable," replied Cagliostro, sitting down at some distance from her, with that affectation of respect, or indifference, which succeeded so well with Oliva.

"It is all very well for you to talk," she said; "you come and go as you like. You breathe the fresh air; you can choose your own pleasures. I vegetate in the space to which you have limited me; I do not breathe, I tremble. I tell you, Monsieur, that your assistance is useless to me if it does not prevent me from dying."

"Dying! you!" said the count, smiling. "Nonsense!"

"I tell you that you are behaving very badly to me; you forget that I love some one deeply, passionately."

"Monsieur Beausire?"

"Yes, Beausire. I love him, I tell you. I never concealed it from you, I believe. You did not imagine I should forget my Beausire?"

"So little did I think so, Mademoiselle, that I bring you news of him."

"Ah!" said Oliva.

"Monsieur de Beausire," continued Cagliostro, "is a charming fellow!"

"*Parbleu!*" said Oliva, who did not see what the count was driving at.

"Young and handsome."

"Yes; is he not?"

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"There, there," said the count, quieting her as if she had been a pet spaniel; "if you are not comfortable in my house, do not blame me for it. Keep your anger for the lieutenant of police, who persecutes you."

"You exasperate me with your coolness, Monsieur," said Oliva. "I would rather you flew in a passion; you manage to pacify me, and that makes me mad with rage."

"Acknowledge, Mademoiselle, that you are unreasonable," replied Cagliostro, sitting down at some distance from her, with that affectation of respect, or indifference, which succeeded so well with Oliva.

"It is all very well for you to talk," she said; "you come and go as you like. You breathe the fresh air; you can choose your own pleasures. I vegetate in the space to which you have limited me; I do not breathe, I tremble. I tell you, Monsieur, that your assistance is useless to me if it does not prevent me from dying."

"Dying! you!" said the count, smiling. "Nonsense!"

"I tell you that you are behaving very badly to me; you forget that I love some one deeply, passionately."

"Monsieur Beausire?"

"Yes, Beausire. I love him, I tell you. I never concealed it from you, I believe. You did not imagine I should forget my Beausire?"

"So little did I think so, Mademoiselle, that I bring you news of him."

"Ah!" said Oliva.

"Monsieur de Beausire," continued Cagliostro, "is a charming fellow!"

"*Parbleu!*" said Oliva, who did not see what the count was driving at.

"Young and handsome."

"Yes; is he not?"

"Full of imagination."

"Full of fire — rather rough toward me ; but he who loves well chastises well."

"Your words are golden. You have as much heart as mind, and as much mind as beauty ; and I who know this, I who am interested in everything loving in the world, — it is a mania with me, — I have conceived the idea of bringing you and Monsieur Beausire together again."

"You did not have that idea a month ago," said Oliva, with a constrained smile.

"Listen, my dear child ; every honest man who sees a pretty woman seeks to please her when he is free, as I am. However, you will acknowledge that if I did pay you some little attention it did not last long, eh ?"

"It is true," said Oliva, in the same tone, "a quarter of an hour at the most."

"It was very natural that I should desist, seeing how much you loved Monsieur de Beausire."

"Ah, you are making fun of me !"

"No, upon my honor ! You resisted me so vigorously."

"Yes, have I not ?" cried Oliva, delighted at being accused of the flagrant crime of resistance. "Yes, you must acknowledge that I resisted."

"It was the consequence of your love," said Cagliostro, phlegmatically.

"But your love, yours," retorted Oliva, "was not very tenacious, then."

"No ; I am neither old enough nor ugly enough, neither poor enough nor foolish enough, to run the risk of a refusal. I felt that you would always have preferred Monsieur de Beausire to me, so I made up my mind accordingly."

"Oh, not at all ! by no means !" said the coquette. "That famous partnership you proposed to me. — you

know what I mean, — the right to give me your visit me, to pay court to me, with all respect and was there not in that some little remains of hope ?” while saying these words the wily girl cast upon heritor such ardent glances, from eyes too long idle, that he was hardly able to withstand them.

“I acknowledge it,” replied Cagliostro. “Your penetration is so great that nothing can escape it ;” and he feigned to turn away his eyes so as not to be dazzled by her glances.

“Let us return to Beausire,” she said, piqued at the count’s indifference ; “what is he doing, and where is he, the dear fellow ?”

Cagliostro, looking at her still with some timidity, replied, “I said that I intended to re-unite you.”

“No, you did not say that,” she murmured, with disdain ; “but since you say it now I hold you to it. Go on. Why did you not bring him here ? — it would have been kind. He is free — ”

“Because,” replied Cagliostro, without showing any surprise at this irony, “Monsieur de Beausire, who, like you, has too much imagination, has embroiled himself with the police.”

“He too !” cried Oliva, turning pale ; for now she felt that she was listening to the truth.

“He too,” repeated Cagliostro, politely.

“What has he done ?” stammered the young woman.

“A charming frolic, an ingenious piece of jugglery ! I call it a farce ; but morose persons, Monsieur de Crosne, for instance, — you know how stupid he is, — well, he calls it robbery.”

“Robbery !” cried Oliva, terrified. “My God !”

“A very pretty robbery indeed ; and one which proves what a taste this poor Beausire has for fine things.”

"Monsieur, Monsieur, is he arrested?"

"No; but he is pursued."

"Will you swear to me that he is not arrested, — that he is in no danger?"

"I can assure you that he is not arrested; but as to the second point I will not give you my word. You know, my dear child, that Monsieur de Beausire, with his figure, his appearance, with all his well-known qualities, having been described to the police, would, if he should show himself, be seized by these bloodhounds. Only think what a lucky catch it would be for Monsieur de Crosne to take you both!"

"Oh, yes, yes; he must conceal himself! Poor fellow! I must hide too. Let me leave France, Monsieur. Please to do me this service; because, you see, shut up here, stifled, I could not resist committing some imprudence."

"What do you call an imprudence, my dear girl?"

"Why, showing myself, going out to get some fresh air."

"Do not be alarmed, my dear; you are already very pale, and you would soon lose your beauty, and then Monsieur de Beausire would not love you any longer. No; take as much air as you please, and amuse yourself with looking out of the windows."

"There, Monsieur," cried Oliva, "you are vexed with me, and you also are about to desert me. I offend you perhaps."

"Me! Are you mad? And how could you have offended me?" he said coldly.

"Because a man who takes a fancy to a woman, — a man of your consequence, a handsome nobleman like you, — has a right to be vexed, to be disgusted even, when she is so silly as to repulse him. Oh, do not leave me, do not abandon me, do not hate me, Monsieur!" and the young

woman, as frightened now as she had been coquettish, put her arm round Cagliostro's neck.

"Poor little one!" said the latter, imprinting a chaste kiss on Oliva's brow; "how frightened she is! Do not think so badly of me. You were in danger, and I rendered you a service. I had some plans with regard to you; I have given them up, that is all. I have no more hatred to manifest toward you than you have gratitude to offer me. I have acted for myself, you have acted for yourself; therefore we are quits."

"Oh, Monsieur, how good and generous you are!" and Oliva threw both arms, instead of one, round Cagliostro's neck.

But the latter looked at her with his accustomed tranquillity, "You see, Oliva, that if you should offer me your love, I —"

"Well?" said she, with a vivid blush.

"Were you to offer me your adorable person I should refuse, so much do I wish to inspire pure sentiments, free from all feeling of selfishness. You think yourself pledged to me. I should believe your feeling toward me one of gratitude rather than affection, of terror rather than love; let us remain as we are. I fulfil your wishes in this, I know, and anticipate your delicate reserve."

Oliva let fall her beautiful arms, and retired to a distance, ashamed, humiliated, the dupe of Cagliostro's apparent generosity, upon which she had not counted.

"So," said the count, "so, my dear Oliva, it is settled: you will still consider me as your friend; you will have every confidence in me; you will make use of my house, my purse, and my credit, and —"

"And I will say," said Oliva, "that there are men in the world superior to any I ever knew." She spoke these words with a charm and dignity which engraved a line

upon that soul of bronze whose body was formerly called Balsamo.

"Every woman is good when you touch the right chord," thought Cagliostro.

"From this evening you shall inhabit the upper story of the hôtel. It is an apartment which consists of three rooms, situated so as to overlook the boulevard and the Rue Saint Claude. The windows look upon Ménilmontant and Belleville. A few persons may see you there; but they are peaceable neighbors, whom you need not fear, — worthy persons who attend to their own affairs and who will never suspect you. Let them see you without exposing yourself unnecessarily; but never allow yourself to be seen by those passing in the street, for the Rue Saint Claude is sometimes explored by the agents of Monsieur de Crosne. At least you will have, up there, air and sunshine."

Oliva clapped her hands joyfully.

"Would you like me to take you there?" said Cagliostro.

"This evening?"

"Certainly, this evening. Does it inconvenience you?"

Oliva looked fixedly at Cagliostro. A vague hope entered her heart, or rather her vain and perverted head.

"Let us go," she said.

The count took a lantern from the antechamber, opened several doors, and ascending a staircase, followed by Oliva, reached on the third story the apartment of which he had spoken. She found her new lodging furnished, decked with flowers, and ready for occupancy.

"I should think I was expected here," she cried.

"Not for you but for myself," said the count. "I like the view from this pavilion, and often sleep here."

Oliva's eyes assumed the yellow tint and flashing ex-

pression one sometimes sees in the eyes of cats. She began to speak; Cagliostro stopped her, saying, "You shall wait for nothing here; your maid will be with you in a quarter of an hour," and he disappeared, with a low bow accompanied by a gracious smile.

The poor prisoner sat down in perfect consternation, almost crushed, by the bed, which already awaited her in an elegant alcove.

"I comprehend absolutely nothing of what is happening to me," she murmured, following with her eyes the man who was really incomprehensible to her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OBSERVATORY.

OLIVA went to bed as soon as the maid whom Cagliostro had sent to her had withdrawn. She slept but little. The thoughts of every nature to which her conversation with the count had given rise, brought only waking dreams or disturbed sleep. We are not happy long when we are too rich or too quiet, after having been too poor or too anxious.

Oliva pitied Beausire ; she admired the count, whom she did not in the least understand. She no longer thought him timid ; she did not suspect him of insensibility.

She felt very much afraid that her sleep might be disturbed by some sylph, and the slightest noise caused her that agitation known by every heroine of romance who sleeps in the North Tower. At the approach of daylight all these terrors — which, however, were not without a certain charm — fled from her. It can hardly be said that Nicole attained this hour of perfect security without some feeling of coquettish spite, — a shade of feeling indescribable by any pencil but that of Watteau, or by any pen but that of Marivaux or Crébillon, junior.

In the morning she allowed herself to sleep, enjoying the pleasure of absorbing in her flower-decked room the purple rays of the morning sun, of seeing the little birds running along the terrace of her window, where their wings made a charming rustling sound among the rose-trees and the Spanish jasmynes.

And it was late, very late, when she felt sufficiently invigorated to seek for motion, too much so to remain idle and recumbent. Then she rose and ran into every corner of this new apartment in which that incomprehensible sylph — how ignorant he must be! — had not been able to find a trap-door through which he might have glided to clap his wings near her bed; and yet sylphs in those days, thanks to the Comte de Gabalis, had lost nothing of their innocent reputation.

Oliva enjoyed the sumptuousness of her apartment the more because it was unexpected. This apartment had been furnished for a man. In it was everything that could make life pleasant; above all, an abundance of light, and fresh, pure air, which would change dungeons into gardens, if it were possible for light and air to penetrate a prison. With childish joy she ran out to the terrace, threw herself down on the tiles among the flowers and mosses, like a snake emerging from its nest. Lying down thus, that she might not be seen from without, she looked between the bars of the balcony at the tops of the trees on the boulevards, the houses in the Popincourt quarter and the chimneys, — a misty ocean, whose unequal waves rose one above the other on her sight. Basking in the sun, listening to catch the noise of rolling carriages, — rather infrequent, indeed, but there were some rolling along the boulevard, — she remained thus very happy for two hours. She even drank the chocolate which the maid brought her, and read a newspaper before she even thought of looking into the street.

It was a dangerous pleasure. The bloodhounds of Monsieur de Crosne, those human hounds who hunt with the nose in the air, might see her. What a frightful awakening after a sleep so sweet!

But this horizontal position could not be maintained for

ever, pleasant as it might be. Nicole raised herself on her elbow, and then she saw the walnut-trees of Ménilmontant, the great trees of the cemetery, the myriads of houses of all colors which rose one above the other, from the hillside of Charonne to the heights of Chaumont, some surrounded by verdant groves, others upon the edges of the chalky cliffs which were covered with heaths and thistles. And here and there on the roads — narrow, ribbon-like paths, winding round these little mountains — in the vineyards, on the white high-roads, could be seen little living beings: peasants upon their asses, children leaning over the fields they were weeding, and vine-dressers trimming the vines.

This rusticity charmed Nicole, who had always sighed for the beautiful country of Taverny ever since she had left that country for this Paris which had been the great object of her desires. At last she was weary of this distant view, and as she had a comfortable and safe position among her flowers, as she could see without danger of being seen, she lowered her eyes from the mountain to the valley, from the horizon to the houses near her. Everywhere, — that is, in the space occupied by three houses, — Oliva found that the windows were closed, or offered but little to attract attention. Here was a house of three stories, inhabited by aged tenants hanging bird-cages on the outside or feeding cats within; there a four-story house, the garret of which, occupied by an Auvergnese porter, was the only one into which she could look, — the other tenants appearing to be absent, having gone into the country perhaps. Finally, a little to the left, in the third house, could be seen curtains of yellow silk, flowers, and — a suitable piece of furniture for this comfortable place — a soft arm-chair, which, placed near the window, seemed to await the dreamer who should occupy it. Oliva thought that

she could distinguish in the deep shadow of this room a figure moving to and fro with regular motion. She restrained her impatience, concealed herself more carefully even than before, and calling her maid, she sought, by entering into conversation with her, to vary the pleasures of solitude by intercourse with a thinking, and better still, a speaking creature.

But the maid, contrary to all tradition, was reserved. She was very glad to explain to her mistress all about Belleville, Charonne, and the Père-Lachaise. She told her the names of the churches of Saint Ambroise and Saint Laurent; she pointed out how the boulevard made a curve in the direction of the right bank of the Seine; but when it came to the neighbors she had not a word to say, — she knew no more about them than her mistress did. Oliva learned nothing about the shadowy apartment with its curtains of yellow silk, nothing about the moving figure, nothing about the arm-chair.

If Oliva had not the satisfaction of learning something about her neighbor beforehand, at least she could promise herself that of making her acquaintance without the aid of another. Therefore she sent away her too discreet servant, that she might apply herself to her exploration without a witness.

The opportunity soon presented itself. The neighbors soon began to open their doors, to take their after-dinner siesta, or dress themselves for their walk in the Place Royale or in the Chemin Vert.

Oliva passed them all in review, with the exception of that restless figure, which, without showing her face, had at last buried itself in the arm-chair, and seemed to be absorbed in silent revery.

It was a woman. She had previously been under the hands of her hairdresser, who had constructed upon her

head one of those Babylonian edifices into the composition of which entered minerals and vegetables, to which animals would have been added if Léonard had ever used them, and if a woman of that period would have consented to make a Noah's ark of her head. Then she had settled herself down in her easy-chair, her back supported by pillows so firm that the equilibrium of the body would be maintained and the monument on her head remain intact even though the house were shaken by an earthquake.

Oliva was at length able to remark that this lady with the magnificent head-dress was pretty ; that her foot, which she had rested on the window-sill, and which was clad in a rose-colored satin slipper, was delicate and enticing. She admired especially her rounded arms and the contour of her bust ; but that which impressed her more than anything was the absorbing nature of her thought, which seemed to render her whole body motionless, and to annihilate her by its power.

This woman, whom we have recognized and whom Oliva could not recognize, did not suspect that any one could see her. The windows opposite hers had never been opened. The hôtel of Monsieur de Cagliostro had never betrayed its secrets, and with the exception of the painters employed to restore it, no living being had been seen at its windows.

To explain this apparent contradiction of Cagliostro's assertion that he sometimes occupied the pavilion, a word will suffice. The count had given orders to have the apartment prepared for Oliva the evening previous, as if he were to occupy it himself. He had, so to speak, lied to himself, so well had his orders been executed.

The lady with the beautiful head-dress remained buried in thought ; Oliva imagined that this beautiful dreamer was musing on some disappointment in love.

From the moment she had seen this pensive recluse

Oliva could not withdraw her eyes from her. She imagined that in her she had found her soul's sister. She constructed for her a romance similar to her own romance, thinking, ingenuous girl, that one could not be pretty and elegant and shut up in the Rue Saint Claude without having some serious anxiety in her heart.

When she had created her romantic story, Oliva, like all exceptional natures, allowed herself to be carried away by her fairy story; she took on wings to fly to meet her companion, whom in her impatience she wished to see impelled by wings like her own.

But the lady with the monument did not stir; she seemed to be sleeping in her chair. For two hours she had not moved. Oliva grew desperate. She would not have made to Adonis or poor Beausire one quarter the advances she had made to the unknown.

Weary of the struggle, her feelings changing from tenderness to hatred, she opened and shut her window repeatedly; as often she frightened the birds in the foliage, and made telegraphic signs so compromising that the most obtuse of the agents of Monsieur de Crosne, if he had been passing along the boulevard or the Rue Saint Claude, would not have failed to see them and try to find their meaning.

At length Nicole came to the conclusion that the lady with the beautiful hair must have seen her gestures, understood her signals, but that she scorned them, — that she was either vain or an idiot. Idiot! — with those fine intelligent eyes, such sensitive hands! Impossible.

Vain, yes; a woman of the nobility in those days was accustomed to look down on a mere citizen. Oliva, discerning in the countenance of the young woman all the characteristics of aristocracy, concluded that she was proud, and that it was impossible to move her; therefore she gave up the attempt.

Nicole was not aware that this supposed haughty lady was Jeanne de Valois, Comtesse de La Motte, who, since the evening before, had been in search of an idea ; that her purpose was to prevent Marie Antoinette and the Cardinal de Rohan from meeting ; that it was still more important that the cardinal, while he did not meet the queen in private life, should firmly believe that he did see her, and should be satisfied with this vision and cease to require the reality.

If Nicole had known all this, she would not have taken refuge, angrily, in the midst of her flowers ; and she would not have thrown over the balcony, in so doing, a pot of fraxinella, which fell into the deserted street below with a frightful crash. Oliva, in alarm, looked quickly to see what damage she had caused.

The preoccupied lady was roused by the noise, saw the flower-pot upon the pavement, and ascended from the effect to the cause, — that is, she raised her eyes from the pavement of the street to the balcony of the hôtel, and she saw Oliva. On seeing her she uttered a loud cry, a cry of terror, a cry which was followed by a rapid movement of her whole body, lately so motionless and almost rigid.

Oliva's eyes and those of this lady met at last, questioned each other, penetrating each other.

Jeanne cried out in the first place, "The queen !" Then suddenly clasping her hands and knitting her brows without daring to move, lest she should cause the strange vision to flee, "Oh !" she murmured, "I sought for a way, and I have found it."

At this moment Oliva heard a noise behind her and turned quickly round. The count was in her room ; he had noticed the exchange of glances.

"They have seen each other !" he said to himself.

Oliva left the balcony abruptly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TWO NEIGHBORS.

FROM the very moment when the two women had seen each other, Oliva, already fascinated by the grace of her neighbor, no longer affected disdain for her ; and moving cautiously among her flowers she returned the smiles which were sent her.

Cagliostro, when visiting her, had not failed to recommend to her the greatest caution, and especially to have nothing to do with her neighbors. This direction had fallen like a thunder-bolt upon Oliva's head, who was already looking forward to pleasant intercourse with her neighbor. She, however, promised to obey him. But he was no sooner gone than she arranged herself on the balcony in such a way as to attract her neighbor's attention. The latter, one may well believe, asked nothing better; and to Oliva's first advances she replied by salutations and by throwing kisses.

Oliva responded cordially to these amiable advances ; she noticed that the unknown no longer left the window without bidding her farewell when she went out, or nodding to her when she returned ; she seemed to have concentrated all her powers of pleasing upon Oliva's balcony. Such a state of things would naturally be followed by some attempt at a more intimate intercourse. And this is what happened : Cagliostro, coming to see Oliva two days after, complained of a visit which had been made at the hôtel by an unknown person.

"Indeed?" said Oliva, blushing a little.

"Yes," replied the count, "a lady, very pretty, young, elegant, presented herself, and spoke to a valet who had responded to her persistent ringing. She asked this man who the young person was who lived in the pavilion on the third story, your apartment, my dear. This woman certainly meant you; she wished to see you. She must know you; you are discovered then. Take care, the police has female spies as well as men in its service, and I warn you that I could not refuse to give you up, if Monsieur de Crosne should demand it."

Oliva, instead of being frightened, recognized immediately this description of her friend, and although determined to thank her by all the means in her power, she dissembled with the count.

"You do not tremble?" said Cagliostro.

"No one has seen me," replied Nicola.

"Then it was not you she wished to see?"

"I do not think so."

"Yet how could she divine that there was a woman in this pavilion? Ah! take care, take care!"

"Ah, Monsieur le Comte," said Oliva, "why should I fear? If I have been seen, which I do not believe, it will not happen again; and if any one should see me, it would only be at a distance, for the house is impenetrable, is it not?"

"Impenetrable, that is the word," replied the count; "for unless the walls are scaled, which is not easy, or the small entrance-door is opened with a key like mine, which is not very easy either, since I never leave it—" and he showed the key which he used to open the lower door. "Now," he continued, "as I have no desire to lose you, I will lend the key to no one; and as it would be of no advantage to you to fall into the hands of Monsieur de

Crosne, you will not allow your wall to be scaled. So, dear child, you are forewarned; manage your own affairs as you please."

Oliva made protestations of every sort, and tried to get rid of the count, who did not insist too much on staying.

The next morning at six o'clock Oliva was out on her balcony, breathing the pure air of the neighboring hills, and darting a curious glance at the closed windows of her courteous friend. The latter, scarcely ever awake before eleven o'clock, showed herself as soon as Oliva appeared. It would seem that she had been watching behind the curtains for an opportunity to see her.

The two women bowed, and Jeanne, putting her head out of the window, looked around to see if any one could hear her. No one appeared. Not only the street but the windows of the houses were deserted. She then put both hands to her mouth, so as to form a sort of speaking-trumpet; and with that vibrating and sustained intonation which is not a cry, but which carries sound farther than the simple voice, she said to Oliva, "I wished to pay you a visit, Madame."

"Hush!" said Oliva, starting back with terror. And she put her finger to her lips.

Jeanne, in her turn, darted behind her curtains, thinking some indiscreet person might be in Oliva's room; but she almost immediately appeared again, reassured by Nicole's smile.

"You cannot, then, be seen?" she said.

"Alas!" said Oliva, with a gesture.

"Can you receive letters?"

"Oh, no!" cried Oliva, terrified.

Jeanne reflected some moments.

Oliva, to thank her for her attentions, sent her a kiss,

which Jeanne returned with interest ; after which, closing her window, she went out.

Oliva felt sure that her friend had thought of some new resource. Jeanne returned in about two hours. The sun was at its height, and the pavement of the street was as hot as the sands of the desert.

Oliva saw her neighbor appear at the window with a cross-bow. Jeanne, laughing, made a sign to Oliva to move away. The latter obeyed, laughing also, and sheltered herself behind her window-blind. Jeanne, aiming with care, discharged a small leaden ball, which, unfortunately, instead of clearing the balcony, struck one of the bars of iron and fell into the street.

Oliva uttered a cry of disappointment ; Jeanne, with an angry shrug of the shoulders, looked a moment down into the street to see if she could see her projectile, then disappeared for some minutes. Oliva, also leaning over her balcony, looked down into the street ; a rag-picker came along hunting on the right and on the left ; did he or did he not see that ball in the gutter ? Oliva could not tell ; she concealed herself so that she might not be seen.

Jeanne's second effort was more successful. Her bow sent faithfully beyond the balcony into the chamber of Nicole a second ball, around which was wound the following note : —

You interest me, most beautiful lady. I find you charming, and love you on merely seeing you. Are you indeed a prisoner ? Do you know that I attempted in vain to visit you ? Will the enchanter who thus watches over you ever let me approach you to let me tell you how I sympathize with a poor victim of man's tyranny ?

I have, as you see, imagination at the service of my friends. Do you wish to be my friend ? It appears that you cannot go

out ; but you can write, doubtless, and as I go out when I please, throw your answer down to me when I pass under your balcony.

If the shooting of the cross-bow should be dangerous, or if it should be discovered, we will adopt some other means of correspondence. Suspend from the top of your balcony in the dusk a ball of cord and attach your note to it ; I will fasten mine to it, and you can draw it up without being seen.

If your eyes tell the truth, I can rely on you for a return of that friendship with which you have inspired me, and together we can conquer the universe.

YOUR FRIEND.

P. S. Did you see any one pick up my first note ?

Jeanne did not sign, she had even disguised her handwriting.

Oliva leaped with joy on receiving the note. She replied to it by the following lines :—

I love you as you love me. I am, indeed, a victim of man's wickedness. But he who keeps me here is a protector, and not a tyrant. He comes secretly to visit me once a day. I will explain all this to you later. I prefer to receive your letters drawn up by a thread rather than by means of the cross-bow.

Alas, no, I cannot go out ! I am locked in ; but it is for my good. Oh, I shall have so much to say to you, if ever I have the good fortune to speak with you ! There are so many things that cannot be written.

Your first note was not picked up by any one, unless by a rag-picker who was passing by ; but such persons cannot read, and to them lead is lead.

Your friend,

OLIVA LEGAY.

Oliva signed her name, without reserve. She made the countess a signal by pretending to unwind a thread, and when evening came on she dropped the ball into the

street. Jeanne was under the balcony, caught the thread and took off the note, — all her movements being communicated to her correspondent by the conducting thread, — and then went home to read what was written. Half an hour later she attached to the fortunate thread a letter containing these words : —

“ One can do what he is resolved to do. You are not kept in sight, for I see you always alone. You are, therefore, able to receive visitors, and even to go out yourself. How is your house secured ? — with a key ? Who has that key ? It is he who visits you, is it not ? Does he keep that key so carefully that you cannot steal it from him, or take an impression from it ? There is no question of any wrong-doing ; we are considering only how to procure for you some hours of freedom, and pleasant walks arm-in-arm with a friend who will console you for all your misfortunes, and restore to you more than you have lost. We will plan even, if you wish it, for your entire freedom. We will discuss this subject in all its details at our first interview.”

Oliva eagerly devoured the contents of this letter. She felt rising to her cheek the fever of independence, and to her heart the joy of eating forbidden fruit. She had noticed that the count, whenever he visited her to bring her a book or some article of jewelry, deposited his dark-lantern on a side-table, and laid his key on the lantern. She therefore got ready a bit of soft wax, and on the next visit of Cagliostro took an impression of the key. While she was performing this operation the count did not once turn his head ; he was looking at the newly opened flowers on the balcony. Oliva therefore could execute her little project without uneasiness ; and as soon as the count had taken his departure she lowered the impression of the key, enclosed in a box, which Jeanne received together with a note.

The next day, at about noon, the cross-bow — an instrument extraordinary and expeditious, an instrument of communication which, in comparison with the thread, was like the telegraph in comparison with a courier on horseback — discharged a note to Oliva, conceived as follows, —

MY DEAREST FRIEND, — This evening at eleven o'clock, when your jealous keeper shall have left you, you will descend, you will draw the bolts, and you will find yourself in the arms of her who calls herself

YOUR LOVING FRIEND.

Oliva trembled with joy, — even more than when she had received Gilbert's tender letters in the springtime of her early loves and secret meetings. At eleven o'clock she went downstairs without having noticed any sign of suspicion on the part of the count. She found Jeanne at the door, who embraced her tenderly, and took her into a carriage drawn up on the boulevard. Stunned, palpitating, intoxicated, Oliva rode with her friend about two hours, during which the two companions exchanged secrets, kisses, and plans for the future.

Jeanne was the first to suggest that Oliva should return home to prevent suspicion on the part of her protector; she had just learned that that protector was Cagliostro. She feared the genius of this man, and saw no safety for her plans but in the most profound mystery.

Oliva had confided in Jeanne without reserve; Beau-sire, the police, — she had told everything. Jeanne had represented herself as a girl of rank living with a lover without the knowledge of her family.

One knew all, the other was ignorant of all; such was the friendship declared between these two women. From this day forth they had no need of cross-bow, nor even of

the ball of thread, for Jeanne had her key. Oliva could come down to her whenever she pleased. A delicate supper, a secret promenade, were baits always sufficient to lure Oliva.

"Does not Monsieur de Cagliostro suspect anything?" Jeanne sometimes asked anxiously.

"He! indeed, if I should tell him everything he would not believe me," replied Oliva.

A week's enjoyment of these nocturnal escapades had made them necessary to Oliva's happiness. At the end of a week Jeanne's name was more frequently heard from Oliva's lips than had ever been either Gilbert's or Beausire's.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

MONSIEUR DE CHARNY had scarcely arrived at his country-seat, and received a few visits, when the doctor ordered him to receive no one, and to keep his room,—an order which was executed with such rigor that not an inhabitant of the canton could see the hero of that naval combat which had made so much noise through all France, and whom all the young girls wanted to see, because he was notoriously brave, and was said to be handsome.

Charny, however, was not so sick in body as was supposed. His malady was confined to his heart and head; but what a malady!—an acute pain, incessant and pitiless, the pain of a memory which consumed as if with fire; the pain of a regret which tore his heart.

Love, after all, is but a delusion. The absent one laments an ideal paradise, instead of regretting a material country; and yet one must admit—however poetical he may be—that the woman truly loved is a paradise rather more material than that of angels.

Monsieur de Charny did not endure this three days. Furious at finding all his dreams dispelled by impossibility, annihilated by space, he caused the order of the physician to be spread through the canton; then intrusting the care of his doors to a faithful servant, Olivier set out in the night from his manor-house, riding a gentle but swift horse. In eight hours he was in Versailles, hiring

through his valet a small house situated behind the royal park.

This house, which had been unoccupied since the tragic death of one of the gentlemen of the wolf-hunting train who had cut his throat there, suited Charny admirably ; he could be even more completely hidden there than in his own manor-house. It was decently furnished, had two doors, — one opening on a deserted street, the other upon an avenue running round the park, — and from the windows on the south, Charny could easily gain the avenue of elms ; for the windows, when the shutters covered with vines and ivy were open, were but doors, only slightly elevated above the ground, through which one could easily jump into the royal park.

This close vicinity to the royal park, although so rarely permitted in those days, was a privilege granted an inspector of the hunt so that he could be conveniently situated for watching over the deer and pheasants of his Majesty.

This solitude was more pleasant to Charny than any other would have been. Was it on account of the country view ? We shall soon see.

When he was completely immured in his new abode, when his valet had quieted the respectful curiosity of the neighborhood, Charny, forgetting as he was forgot, began a life the very thought of which would make any one tremble who during his existence in this world has loved or has even heard of love.

In less than fifteen days he knew all the habits of every one connected with the palace, even those of the guards. He knew the hours when the birds came to drink in the marshes, when the frightened deer ran along by. He knew the hours when all was silent ; those when the queen walked with her ladies, and when the officers were mak-

ing their rounds; in a word he lived, although apart from them, with those who inhabited that Trianon, the temple of his insane adorations.

As the weather was fine, as the mild and perfumed nights allowed his eyes to range at greater liberty, he passed a portion of them under the jasmines climbing above his window, listening to the distant noises which came from the palace, watching through the interstices of the foliage the lights which were continually moving, up to the hour of retiring. In a short time the window was not sufficient. He was too distant from that noise and those lights. He leaped from his window to the turf below, sure of meeting at that hour neither dogs nor guards; and he indulged in the delicious, perilous pleasure of going even to the edge of the thicket, to the point which separated the deep shadow from the bright moonlight, there to observe those outlines of light and shadow which were formed on the white curtains of the queen's apartment.

In this way he saw her frequently without her suspecting his presence. He could recognize her a quarter of a league away, when walking with her ladies or with gentlemen of her acquaintance, playing with her Chinese parasol which she held over her large flower-trimmed hat. He never mistook her step nor her attitude for that of another. He knew all the dresses of the queen, and could distinguish through the leaves the long, green frock with bands of black moiré which undulated with her chastely seductive movements.

And when the vision had disappeared, when the night had permitted him to go as far as the statues of the peristyle, to watch the last movements of that beloved shadow, Charny would return to his window, and through an opening in the foliage he had contrived to make, gaze at a

distance upon the light shining in the queen's windows, until it disappeared ; then he subsisted through the night on memory and hope, as he had fed through the day on observation and admiration.

One night when Charny had returned home, and two hours had passed since he had bidden adieu to the absent shadow, just as he was leaving his window to retire to bed, he heard the noise of a key turning gently in the lock ; he returned to his observatory and listened. It was late ; it was striking midnight from all the clocks around Versailles. Charny was surprised at hearing this unaccustomed sound.

This refractory lock was that of a little door opening into the park, situated about twenty-five paces from Olivier's house. This gate was never opened, except during the days of the grand hunt when it was thrown open to admit the baskets of game. Charny noticed that those who opened this gate did not speak ; they locked the door after them, and entered the avenue which ran along under his windows, concealed from any one walking in the avenue by the shrubbery and hanging vine-leaves. Besides, those who were walking held down their heads and moved with haste. Charny could hardly distinguish them in the darkness ; but by the rustling of their garments against the bushes he perceived that they were two women.

These women, on turning into the wide avenue opposite Charny's window, came suddenly into the full moonlight, and Olivier could with difficulty restrain from uttering a cry of joyful surprise at recognizing the form and head-dress of Marie Antoinette, and also the lower part of her face notwithstanding the shadow cast upon it by her hat. She held a rose in her hand.

With a palpitating heart, Charny glided from his win-

dow into the park. He ran along upon the grass to avoid being heard, hiding behind the largest trees, and keeping in sight the two women whose pace was gradually becoming slower.

What ought he to do? The queen had a companion; therefore she was in no danger. Oh! if she were only alone, he would have braved any torture to approach her and say to her on his knees, "I love you!" Oh, if she were only threatened with some great peril, he would have thrown away his life to save that precious life! As he was thinking all this, dreaming a thousand tender follies; the two women stopped suddenly; one of them — of less stature than the other — spoke a few words in a low voice to her companion and left her.

The queen remained alone; the other lady hastened toward some object which Charny could not yet discern. The queen, beating the ground with her little foot, was leaning against a tree, enveloped in a mantle in such a manner as to cover her head with the hood.

When Charny saw her alone and so pensive, he leaped forward as if to throw himself on his knees before her. But he reflected that he was at least thirty steps away from her, and that before he could run that distance she would see him and take fright; that she would cry out or flee; that her cries would in the first place attract her companion and later some of the guards; that they would search the park and perhaps discover his retreat, and there would be an end forever to secrecy, happiness, and love.

Scarcely had he restrained his almost irresistible impulse when the queen's companion returned, — and not alone. About two steps behind her walked a man of noble stature, enveloped in a large cloak, and wearing on his head a capacious hat.

This man, at sight of whom Monsieur de Charny trembled with hatred and jealousy, did not walk with the gait of a conqueror. Staggering, dragging his feet with hesitation, he seemed like a man feeling his way in the dark, although he had the queen's companion as a guide, and the queen herself was standing before him, white and erect, under the tree. When he saw Marie Antoinette, the trembling which Charny had noticed appeared to increase. The unknown took off his hat and swept the ground with it, so to speak. He came nearer. Charny saw him enter the deep shadow of the tree ; he bowed profoundly many times.

The surprise of Charny meanwhile had changed to stupefaction. From stupefaction he was soon to pass to another emotion, painful in a very different way. Why should the queen come into the park at so late an hour ? Why had that man come there ? Why was he waiting in concealment ? Why did the queen send her companion to him instead of going herself ? Charny was almost beside himself. He remembered, however, that the queen was interested in mysterious politics ; that she sometimes engaged in intrigues with the German courts, — relations of which the king was jealous, and which he severely forbade.

Perhaps this mysterious cavalier was a courier from Schoenbrun or Berlin, some bearer of a secret message, one of those German emissaries whom Louis XVI. had become so reluctant to receive at Versailles. This idea, like the bandage of ice which the doctor applies to a burning and feverish brow, refreshed this poor Olivier, restored to him his senses, and quieted the delirium of his first anger. Besides, the queen retained an attitude full of dignity.

The companion, standing about three paces away, anxious, attentive, watchful, as are the duennas in the

pictures of Watteau, disturbed somewhat by her cheerful anxiety Monsieur de Charny's opinion as to the chaste purpose of this meeting. But it is as dangerous to be surprised at a political rendezvous, as it is disgraceful to be surprised at a rendezvous of love; and a lover and a conspirator look very much alike: both have the same cloak, the same quickness of hearing, and the same unsteadiness of limb.

Charny had not much time to give to these reflections. The companion suddenly interrupted the conversation. The cavalier made a movement as if to prostrate himself at the queen's feet; he was receiving doubtless his dismissal after the audience.

Charny hid behind a great tree. Assuredly, the group in separating must pass one by one before him. To hold his breath, to pray the gnomes and sylphs to extinguish every echo, whether of earth or sky, was the only thing left for him to do.

At that moment he thought he saw a light-colored object slipping down from the royal mantle; the gentleman stooped quickly even to the ground, then he arose with a respectful bow and fled, — for it would be impossible to express in any other terms the rapidity of his departure. But he was arrested in his course by the queen's companion, who called him back with a little cry, and when he had stopped, said to him in a low voice, "Stay." He was a very obedient cavalier, for he stopped instantly and waited.

Charny then saw the two women pass, holding each other's arm, two steps from his hiding-place; the air displaced by the queen's gown stirred the blades of grass almost under Charny's hand. He even recognized the perfume he had been accustomed to admire when near the queen, vervain and mignonette mingled together,

intoxicating to his senses and awakening pleasing remembrances.

The women passed on and disappeared.

Then, some moments after, came the unknown, of whom the young man had no longer thought while he was watching the queen in her walk to the gate ; he kissed passionately, madly, a fresh and perfumed rose, which certainly was that whose beauty Charny had remarked when the queen had entered the park, and which just now he had seen fall from her hand.

A rose, and a kiss upon that rose ! What had this to do with an embassy and secrets of State ?

Charny was almost beside himself. He was about to rush on this man and snatch the flower from his grasp, when the queen's companion reappeared and called out, "Come, Monseigneur."

Charny believed himself in the presence of some prince of the blood, and to keep himself from falling half-dead on the ground, he supported himself against the tree behind which he had been concealed.

The unknown hastened to the spot whence the voice had issued, and in company with the lady immediately disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE QUEEN'S HAND.

WHEN Charny returned to his house, quite broken down by this terrible blow, he found that he no longer had the strength to contend against this new calamity by which he was stricken.

So Providence had brought him back to Versailles, and had granted him this precious hiding-place, only to put him on the track of a crime committed by the queen in contempt of conjugal fidelity, of royal dignity, and love's obligations.

Beyond any doubt, the man received in the park was a new lover. Charny, in the fever of the night, in the delirium of his despair, in vain sought to persuade himself that the man who had received the rose was an ambassador, and that the rose was simply the pledge of a secret agreement, and was designed to serve as a substitute for a letter, which might be too compromising. Nothing, however, was of any avail against his suspicions. It remained for him only to examine his own conduct, and to ask himself why, in the presence of such an evil, he had remained so inactive. The instinct which had enjoined that inactivity was, upon reflection, easily understood.

In the most violent crises of experience, action springs at the moment from the deep recesses of the heart and mind; and the instinct by which it is prompted is, in men well trained, a union of habit and reflection acting in the emergency with very great rapidity. If Charny

had not acted it was because the secret affairs of his sovereign did not concern him ; because in showing interest he would reveal his love ; because in compromising the queen he would have betrayed himself ; and because it would have been a tactical error to afford to traitors, whom he wished to convict, an example of similar treason committed by himself. If he had not acted it was because in accosting a man honored by the royal confidence he would have incurred the risk of falling into an odious quarrel, through a sort of ambuscade, which the queen never would have forgiven. In fine, the word "Monseigneur," uttered at last by the complaisant companion, was a salutary warning, coming somewhat late, to be sure, which had saved Charny by opening his eyes when he was at the height of his fury. What would have become of him if, while assailing that man, sword in hand, he had suddenly heard him called "Monseigneur."

Such were the thoughts which occupied Charny's mind through all the night and the first part of the following day. After twelve o'clock the events of the night before were no longer of any moment to him. There remained to him only the feverish, consuming suspense in which he awaited the coming of another night, with its possible revelations.

At last the night came, bringing to our ardent watcher gloomy desires and wild thoughts. The noises and movements to which he had been accustomed had for him now new meanings. He saw in the distance the queen walking on the terrace, with lights borne before her. She appeared to him to be thoughtful, uncertain, still agitated by the incident of the previous night.

Gradually all the lights in and about the palace were extinguished, and silence brooded over the park. Charny remembered well the hour of the queen's rendezvous.

Midnight came at length, and his heart was swollen almost to bursting. "Now," he said, "I shall hear the grating of the bolts, and the gate will open." But nothing occurred to break the silence. Charny then reflected — with some surprise that he had not thought of it before — that the same events are not likely to occur on two days in succession; that there was nothing obligatory in this love beyond the love itself; and that these persons would be very imprudent were they to acquire the habit of meeting every day. No; it was very certain that the queen would not repeat so soon the imprudence he had witnessed.

Suddenly there was a grinding of bolts, and the gate was opened. A mortal paleness covered Charny's face when he saw again the two women. "How much she must love him!" he murmured.

The women proceeded precisely as they did in the first instance, and passed by Charny's window with hurried steps. He, as he had done before, leaped from his window, when they had gone so far that they could not hear him, and followed them cautiously. As he went he swore to himself that he would be prudent, firm, impassive. He determined to keep in mind that he was a subject, she a queen; that he was a man, and as such was bound to show respect; that she was a woman, and as such was entitled to consideration. As he could not trust much to his fiery and explosive temper, he flung his sword behind a tuft of mallows at the foot of a chestnut-tree.

Meantime the two ladies had reached the same place where they had paused on their former expedition. Charny again recognized the queen, and saw her again conceal her face under her hood, while her serviceable friend went to seek, in his hiding-place, the unknown person whom she had called "Monseigneur."

Where was that hiding-place? Charny asked himself. There was, indeed, in the direction taken by the queen's companion, the pavilion known as Apollo's Baths, surrounded by tall hedges; but how could the stranger hide himself there? How had he gained access to the place? Charny remembered, then, that on that side of the park there was a small gate like that by which the two ladies had entered. The unknown, doubtless, had a key to that gate. From there he could glide to shelter in Apollo's Baths, where he could lie in waiting until he should be summoned. Yes, that explained everything. By way of the same little gate "Monseigneur" took his departure after his interview with the queen.

A few moments later Charny perceived the cloak and hat which he had observed on the previous occasion. This time the unknown did not show the same respectful reserve in his approach to the queen. He came up with rapid steps and almost running.

The queen, leaning against a tree, seated herself upon the cloak which this new Raleigh spread for her; and while the vigilant friend kept watch, as on the night before, the amorous nobleman knelt on the moss and began talking with the fluency of passion. The queen, with her head drooping, seemed as if yielding to love's sweet melancholy. Charny could not hear what was said; but the manner of the cavalier bore the stamp of poesy and love. His every intonation was equivalent to an ardent protestation.

The queen made no response, and nevertheless the unknown seemed to be speaking with increasing tenderness. It appeared sometimes to the unfortunate Charny that the words spoken were about to become intelligible to him, and he thought that on hearing them he should die of rage and jealousy. But he heard nothing — noth-

ing. Whenever the voice of the speaker was slightly raised, a significant gesture from the watchful companion compelled the impassioned orator to lower the tone of his address.

The queen preserved an obstinate silence. The other, adding entreaty to entreaty, as Charny inferred from the vibrating melody of his tones, obtained from her only the sweet consent of silence, — an inadequate satisfaction for burning lips which had begun to taste of love.

Suddenly, however, the queen seemed to let fall a few murmured words which the unknown alone could hear; and as soon as he had heard them he cried out, so loud that the words reached Charny's ears: "Thank you! oh, I thank my gracious queen! Farewell, then, — till to-morrow."

The queen completely hid her face, already so well concealed.

Charny felt a cold sweat trickling down his temples in large drops.

The unknown saw both hands of the queen extended toward him. He seized them in his own and kissed them so fervently that Charny, looking on, experienced all the tortures which savage humanity has stolen from the infernal regions. The queen then rose suddenly, and seized the arm of her companion. The two then fled together, passing once more very near to Charny in his concealment. The unknown also fled, and Charny, who had not risen from the ground on which he was prostrated by indescribable suffering, thought that he heard the sound of the two gates closing at the same time.

We shall not attempt to depict the situation in which Charny found himself after that horrible discovery. He spent the night coursing furiously through the park, in the alleys, which he reproached, in his despair, for their

criminal complicity. Quite beside himself for several hours, he recovered his reason only when he stumbled over the sword which he had thrown aside lest he should be tempted to use it. This sword, which obstructed his course and threw him to the ground, recalled him at once to a consciousness of his power and of his dignity. He discontinued his mad running about, during which he had bruised himself against the trees, and walked directly and quietly along the avenue still impressed by the footsteps of the two ladies and of the unknown.

He went to the place where the queen had been sitting. The mosses still beaten down recalled to him his own misery and the happiness of another. But instead of lamenting, or indulging again in anger, Olivier set himself to reflecting on the nature of this love and the rank of the person by whom it was inspired. He examined the footsteps of that nobleman with the same cool attention which he would have given to those of a wild animal. He went to the gate behind Apollo's Baths. By climbing up and looking over the wall he could see the tracks of a horse, and the grass badly trodden down. "He comes from that direction ! He comes not from Versailles, but from Paris ;" Olivier said to himself. "He comes alone, — and to-morrow he intends coming again ; for he said, 'Till to-morrow.' Till to-morrow, then, let me wait. To-morrow will be the last day of my life, or else I am a coward and have never loved. Come, come," he continued, striking gently on his breast, as a horseman strokes the neck of his horse, "be calm, be strong, for the trial is not yet over."

He then looked around him once more, turning his eyes away from the palace lest he should see the queen's window lighted ; for that light would have been still another lie, another stain. The lighted window would mean that the queen's chamber was occupied. But why should one

lie in that manner after attaining to the rights of shamelessness and dishonor, when so little distance remains between hidden shame and public scandal?

At length, however, Charny could no longer refrain from looking at the window of the queen's chamber. It was lighted!

"To make a pretence of being in her chamber," said Charny, with bitter irony, "when she is running about the park with a lover! Truly that is chastity gone to waste! She is really too kind, this queen, in assuming this pretence toward us. It is true, however, that she may fear giving annoyance to her husband." And Charny, burying his nails in his flesh advanced with measured steps along the path leading to his lodge.

"They said, 'Till to-morrow,'" he added, after entering. "Yes, till to-morrow — for every one. For to-morrow, Madame, there will be four of us at the rendezvous."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WOMAN AND QUEEN.

THE next night the scene was repeated. The door opened just at midnight, and the two women appeared.

Charny had determined to discover this evening who was the happy personage whom the queen thus favored. He therefore followed the two women, concealing himself behind the shrubbery; but when he arrived at the place where for two nights the meeting of the lovers had taken place, he found no one there. The queen's companion was dragging her Majesty toward Apollo's Baths. A horrible anxiety, a suffering of a new nature overwhelmed him. In his innocent uprightness, he had not supposed that the crime could be carried so far as that.

The queen, smiling and whispering, walked toward the gloomy retreat at the gate of which the unknown gentleman awaited her with extended arms. She entered, also with outstretched arms, and the iron gate closed behind her. Her accomplice remained outside, leaning upon a broken column cushioned by a luxurious growth of foliage.

Charny was mistaken as to his power of endurance, which proved itself unable to resist such a shock. Just as he was about to rush upon the queen's companion to unmask her, to discover who she was, to reproach her, to strangle her perhaps, the blood rushed like a conquering torrent to his temples and his throat, and suffocated him. He fell upon the ground, breathing a feeble sigh, which for

a moment startled from her tranquillity that sentinel at the gate of Apollo's Baths. An internal hemorrhage, caused by the re-opening of his wound, had stifled him.

Charny was at length recalled to life by the coldness of the dew, by the dampness of the ground, and by a strong sense of his grief. He staggered as he arose, recognized the locality, became conscious of his own condition, and remembered what had happened. The sentinel had disappeared, not a sound could be heard. A clock in Versailles soon after striking two, he realized that his swoon had been one of long duration.

The frightful vision had disappeared; queen, lover, companion, had had time to flee. Charny was enabled to convince himself of this by observing on the other side of the wall the recent footprints of a horse. These tracks and some broken branches in the vicinity of the gate of Apollo's Baths confirmed his conviction.

The night was one long delirium, and the morning found him still agitated. Pale as death, looking ten years older than the day before, he called his valet to dress him in a black velvet suit, such as was worn by rich persons of the third estate. Gloomy, mute, absorbed in his griefs, he took his way to the Trianon, at the moment when the guard had just been relieved,—that is, at about ten o'clock. The queen was coming from the chapel where she had gone to attend Mass. As she passed by all heads were respectfully bowed, and the officers lowered their swords.

Charny saw some women red with vexation at seeing the queen look so beautiful. Beautiful indeed she was, with her fine hair carried back from her temples, with her delicate features, her smiling mouth, her eyes showing weariness, but sparkling with a soft light. Suddenly she

caught sight of Charny ; she blushed, and uttered a cry of surprise.

Charny did not bow. He continued gazing at the queen, who perceived from his look that some new misfortune must have occurred. She approached him. "I thought you had gone to your country-seat, Monsieur de Charny," she said severely.

"I have come back, Madame," he said in a tone sharp and almost impolite.

She paused, stupefied, — she, who could always distinguish the least shade of expression.

After this exchange of looks and words which were almost hostile, she turned toward the ladies. "Good-morning, Countess," she said in a friendly way to Madame de La Motte, giving her a familiar glance.

Charny started, and watched more attentively. Jeanne, uneasy under this scrutiny, turned away her head. Charny looked after her as if he were a madman, until she once more turned her face to him. Then he walked round her studying her movements.

The queen, bowing to the right and to the left, was at the same time watching the conduct of those two mutual observers. "Can he have lost his mind?" she thought. "Poor fellow!" and she again approached him. "How is your health, Monsieur de Charny?" she said pleasantly.

"I am very well, Madame, but — thank God! — not so well as your Majesty," and he bowed in such a manner as to frighten the queen more than he had before surprised her.

"There is something in all this," said Jeanne, still watchful.

"Where are you living now?" continued the queen.

"At Versailles, Madame," said Olivier.

"How long have you been here?"

"For three nights," replied the young man, giving expression to his words by look and gesture.

The queen displayed no emotion; Jeanne gave a start.

"Have you not something to say to me?" the queen asked Charny, with angelic sweetness.

"Oh, Madame," replied the latter, "I could say too many things to your Majesty."

"Come, then," she said abruptly.

"I must be watchful," thought Jeanne.

The queen, with rapid steps, walked on to her apartment. What appeared providential to Madame de La Motte was that Marie Antoinette, to avoid the appearance of seeking a *tête-à-tête*, invited some persons to follow her. Jeanne slipped in among these persons. The queen, on reaching her apartment, dismissed Madame de Misery and all her attendants.

The weather was mild; the sun's heat and light, half-veiled by clouds, were subdued to a gentle softness. The queen opened the window looking on a little balcony; she sat down before her desk loaded with letters; she waited. By degrees the persons who had followed her perceived her desire to be alone, and retired. Charny, impatient, consumed with rage, was crushing his hat in his hand.

"Speak! speak!" said the queen; "you seem to be very much agitated, Monsieur."

"How shall I begin?" said Charny, thinking aloud; "how can I dare accuse at once honor, fidelity, and Majesty?"

"What do you say?" cried Marie Antoinette, turning quickly round with flaming eyes.

"And still, I shall speak only of what I have seen!" continued Charny.

The queen rose. "Monsieur," she said coldly, "it is early in the morning for me to believe that you can be intoxicated; and yet you assume an attitude which is not becoming to young gentlemen before breakfast." She expected to see him overwhelmed by this scornful reproach; but he, motionless as if he had not heard it, said, —

"After all, what is a queen? A woman. And I, what am I? A man, as well as a subject."

"Monsieur!"

"Madame, let us not confuse what I have to say to you by an anger which would end in madness. I think I have proved to you that I have respect for royal dignity; I fear that I have also proved that I have an insane passion for the person of the queen. So make your choice; at which of the two, the queen or the woman, do you prefer that this adorer should cast an accusation of opprobrium and disloyalty?"

"Monsieur de Charny," cried the queen, turning pale and walking up to the young man, "if you do not instantly leave this room, I will have you driven out by the guards."

"I will tell you, then, before being driven out, why you are an unworthy queen, and a woman without honor!" cried Charny, wild with rage. "For the last three nights I have followed you in your park!"

Instead of seeing her give a start of horror at this terrible blow, as he had hoped she would, Charny was surprised to see her raise her head and approach him.

"Monsieur de Charny," she said, taking his hand, "you are in a state which excites my pity. Take care, your eyes flash, your hand trembles, your cheeks are pale, the blood is all rushing to your heart. You are suffering; shall I call for assistance?"

"I saw you," he continued coldly, — "saw you with

that man when you gave him the rose, when he kissed your hands, — saw you when you entered Apollo's Baths with him."

The queen passed her hand over her brow as if to assure herself that she was not asleep.

"Come," she said, "sit down, for you will fall if I do not support you, — sit down, I tell you."

Charny fell, in fact, into an easy-chair, and the queen seated herself upon a stool by his side. Then, taking both his hands and looking at him as if she would search his very soul, "Be calm," she said; "quiet this agitation of heart and head, and repeat what you have just said."

"Oh, do you wish to kill me?" murmured the unhappy man.

"Be still, and let me question you. When did you return from your country-seat?"

"Fifteen days ago."

"Where are you lodging?"

"In the house of the huntsman, which I have hired."

"Ah, yes; the house of the suicide, at the edge of the park."

Charny nodded affirmatively.

"You speak of a person whom you saw with me?"

"I speak, in the first place, of you, whom I saw."

"Where did you see me?"

"In the park."

"At what hour? — on what day?"

"At midnight on Tuesday — the first time."

"You saw me?"

"As plainly as I see you now; and I also saw the lady who accompanied you."

"Some one accompanied me? Could you recognize this person?"

"I thought I saw her just now; but I should not dare

to affirm it. The figure only was the same; as to the face, one always conceals that when one has crimes to commit."

"Very well," said the queen, calmly, "you did not recognize my companion; but me —"

"Oh, you, Madame, I saw you as surely as I see you now!"

The queen stamped her foot with annoyance.

"And — this companion," she said, — "the one to whom I gave a rose? Did you not say you saw me give a rose?"

"Yes; but I could not approach that cavalier."

"But you know him?"

"They called him 'Monseigneur;' that is all I know."

The queen struck her forehead in concentrated anger. "Continue," she said; "Tuesday I gave a rose, — and Wednesday?"

"On Wednesday you gave him your two hands to kiss."

"Oh!" she murmured, biting her hands. "And then on Thursday, — yesterday?"

"Yesterday you passed an hour and a half in Apollo's Baths with that man, where your companion left you alone."

The queen rose impetuously.

"And — you — saw me?" she said, jerking out every syllable.

Charny lifted his hand as if to swear.

"Oh," groaned the queen, in her turn transported with rage, "he swears it!"

Charny solemnly repeated his accusing gesture.

"Me, me?" said the queen, striking her bosom. "You saw me?"

"Yes, you. On Tuesday you wore your green dress

with watered stripes; on Wednesday, your dinner dress with large blue and red flowers; yesterday, yesterday, the brown silk gown which you wore when I kissed your hand for the first time. It was you, it was really you! I die with grief and shame in saying to you: Upon my life! upon my honor! by my God! it was you, Madame, it was you!"

The queen walked back and forth in the balcony with hurried steps, caring but little whether or not her strange agitation were observed by the spectators in the courtyard below, who were devouring her with their eyes.

"If I should take an oath," she said, — "if I were to swear by my son, by my God, — I have a God, as you have! No, he does not believe me! He will not believe me!"

Charny held down his head.

"Madman!" added the queen, shaking him by the arm with energy; and she dragged him from the balcony into the room. "There must be rare pleasure in thus accusing an innocent, an irreproachable woman; it is a brilliant distinction thus to dishonor a queen. Do you believe me when I tell you that it was not I whom you saw? Do you believe me when I swear on this crucifix that during the past three days I have not left the palace after four o'clock in the evening? Do you wish me to prove by my women, by the king who saw me here, that I could not be elsewhere? No, no; he does not believe me! he does not believe me!"

"I saw you!" Charny coldly replied.

"Oh," cried the queen, suddenly, "I know, I know! Has not this atrocious calumny already been thrown in my face? Was I not seen at the Opera-ball, making scandal for the whole court? Did they not see me at Mesmer's, in a crisis, making scandal for the curious and

for the women of the town? You know it well, you who fought for me!"

"Madame, at that time I fought because I did not believe it. Now, I would fight because I do believe it."

The queen raised to heaven her arms, rigid with despair, two burning tears rolled down her cheeks. "My God!" she said, "send me an idea with which to save myself! I do not wish to be despised by this man, O my God!"

Charny was stirred to the very depths of his heart by this simple and earnest prayer. He hid his face in his hands.

The queen, after a moment's reflection, said, "Monsieur, you owe me reparation. This is the one I shall exact of you: Three successive nights you have seen me at night in my park in company with a man. You knew, however, that advantage had already been taken of my resemblance to a woman (I know not who she is) who has in her face and carriage something in common with me, — with me, unfortunate queen! But since you would rather believe that it is I who am running about thus at night; since you insist that it is I, — return to the park at the same hour. Go there with me. If it is I whom you saw yesterday you will, of course, not see me to-night, since I shall be with you; if it is another, why should we not see her together? And if we do see her — Ah, Monsieur, will you regret what you have made me suffer?"

Charny, placing both hands upon his heart, murmured, "You are doing too much for me, Madame. I deserve death; do not crush me with your goodness."

"Oh, I will crush you with proofs!" said the queen. "Not a word to any one. This evening at ten o'clock, wait alone at the door of the huntsman's lodge for that which I have determined to do in order to convince you. Go, Monsieur, and let nothing be suspected outside."

Charny knelt without a word and then withdrew. At the end of the second salon, he passed within view of Jeanne, who looked at him fixedly, and who, with all the others, was waiting to return to the queen's room whenever her Majesty should send for them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WOMAN AND DEMON.

JEANNE had noticed Charny's agitation, the queen's anxiety, and the eager desire of both to engage in conversation. To a woman of Jeanne's insight this was more than enough to enable her to divine many things.

After the meeting contrived by Cagliostro between Madame de La Motte and Oliva, the comedy of the last three nights needs no comments.

Jeanne, having returned to the queen's room, listened attentively, and watched every movement of the queen to discover, if possible, any confirmation of her suspicions. But the queen had been for some time distrustful of everybody. She showed no emotion of any kind ; Jeanne was therefore reduced to her own conjecture. Already she had ordered one of her lackeys to follow Monsieur de Charny. The lackey returned, and informed her that the count had disappeared in a house at the end of the park near the avenue of elms. "Doubtless," thought Jeanne, "this man is a lover who has seen all."

She heard the queen say to Madame de Misery, "I do not feel well, my dear Misery, and I shall retire to-night at eight o'clock."

As the lady of honor questioned her, "I shall not receive," said the queen.

"It is clear enough," said Jeanne to herself ; "he would be stupid indeed who could not understand that."

The queen, still a prey to the emotions caused by her interview with Charny, soon dismissed all her suite. For the first time since her admission at court Jeanne congratulated herself on permission to withdraw.

"Matters are becoming embroiled here," she said; "I must go to Paris! It is time to undo what I have done." And she set out for Paris immediately.

When she reached her own house in the Rue Saint Claude, she found there a superb present of silver plate which the cardinal had sent that very morning. After glancing carelessly at this present, although it was valuable, she looked up from behind her curtains to Oliva's windows, which were not yet opened. Oliva was still asleep, being doubtless much fatigued.

Jeanne then drove to the hôtel of the cardinal, whom she found radiant and elated with joy and pride; seated before his desk, a master-piece of Boule, he was tearing up and re-writing unweariedly a letter which he was always beginning and could never finish.

As the valet announced Madame de La Motte, Monseigneur le Cardinal exclaimed, "Dear Countess!" and he advanced to meet her.

Jeanne received the kisses with which the prelate covered her hands and arms, and placed herself where she could most comfortably sustain her part in the conversation. Monseigneur began with protestations of gratitude which were not deficient in eloquent sincerity.

Jeanne interrupted him. "Do you know?" she said, "that you are a delicate lover, Monseigneur, and that I thank you?"

"For what?"

"It is not for the tasteful gift which you sent me this morning; it is for the precaution you took in not sending it to the pleasure-house. That was delicate

indeed. Your heart does not prostitute itself, it gives itself."

"With whom should one act with delicacy if not with you?" replied the cardinal.

"You are not a happy man only, but a triumphant god."

"I confess it, and the happiness frightens me; it troubles me; it renders the sight of other men insupportable to me. I recall that Pagan fable of Jupiter weary of his own light."

Jeanne smiled.

"Have you just come from Versailles?" the cardinal asked eagerly.

"Yes."

"You — have seen her?"

"I — have just left her."

"Did she — say — anything?"

"Eh, what would you have her say?"

"Pardon me; it is no longer curiosity, it is madness."

"Do not ask me anything."

"Oh, Countess."

"No, I tell you."

"How you say that! One would think to see you that you bring bad news."

"Monseigneur, do not compel me to speak."

"Countess! Countess!" and the cardinal turned pale.

"A too great happiness," he said, "is like the culminating point of Fortune's wheel; when you are at its summit, you are at the beginning of its decline. But do not spare me if there is any misfortune; there is none — is there?"

"I will call it on the contrary, Monseigneur, a great good fortune," replied Jeanne.

"It! what do you mean by 'it;' what do you call a good fortune?"

"Not to have been discovered," said Jeanne, dryly.

"Oh!" and he began to smile. "With the precautions of two hearts and one mind —"

"One mind and two hearts, Monseigneur, cannot prevent eyes from looking through the branches."

"Has any one seen?" cried Monsieur de Rohan, in terror.

"I have every reason to believe so."

"Then if we were seen, we were recognized?"

"Oh, as to that, Monseigneur, you cannot believe it; if we were recognized, if this secret were in any one's possession, Jeanne de Valois would already be at the world's end, and you, — you would be dead."

"That is true. All these reservations, Countess, burn me by slow fire. Suppose that we were seen. But persons are often seen walking in the park. Is it not allowed?"

"Ask the king."

"The king knows!"

"Once more I say, if the king knew, you would be in the Bastille, I in the Hospital. But as one misfortune avoided is better than two happy events, I have come to tell you not to tempt Providence a second time."

"What do you say?" cried the cardinal; "what is the meaning of your words, dear Countess?"

"Do you not understand?"

"I am afraid."

"I should be afraid, if you did not reassure me."

"And how can I do that?"

"By not going to Versailles."

The cardinal sprang up. "In the daytime?" he said, smiling.

"In the daytime certainly, but also in the night!"

Monsieur de Rohan shuddered, and dropped the countess's hand. "Impossible!" he said.

"It is my turn to be frank with you," she replied.

"You said, I think, 'impossible.' Why impossible, if you please?"

"Because my heart is filled with a love which will end only with my life."

"I see that," she interrupted, speaking ironically; "and it is to reach the end more quickly that you persist in returning to the park. Yes; if you go there again, your love will end only with your life, and both would be cut down by the same blow."

"How many terrors, Countess! and you were so courageous yesterday!"

"I have the courage of animals. I am not afraid while there is no danger."

"I have the courage of my race; I am not happy except in the presence of danger."

"Very well; but you will then allow me to tell you —"

"Nothing, Countess, nothing," cried the amorous prelate; "the sacrifice is made, the die is cast; give me death if it must come, — but give me love! I shall go again to Versailles."

"Alone?" said the countess.

"Would you desert me?" said Monsieur de Rohan, in a reproachful tone.

"I most certainly would!"

"She certainly will come."

"You are mistaken, she will not come."

"Is it possible that you came from her to tell me that?" said the cardinal, trembling.

"It is the blow I have been trying to soften for the last half-hour."

"She will not see me?"

"Never, and it is I who advised her to make this decision."

"Madame," said the prelate, in a thrilling voice, "it is

wrong for you to plunge the knife into a heart which you know to be so tender."

"It would be much more so, Monseigneur, to allow two mad creatures to be ruined for want of good advice. I give it; let those who will, profit by it."

"Countess, Countess, I would rather die!"

"That is your concern, and it is easily accomplished."

"Death for death," said the cardinal, gloomily. "I prefer the end of a reprobate. Blessed be hell where I shall meet my accomplice!"

"Holy prelate, you are blaspheming!" said the countess; "as subject you are dethroning your queen! as man you are ruining a woman!"

The cardinal seized the countess by the hand and speaking wildly, "Acknowledge that she did not tell you that!" cried he, "and that she will not renounce me thus."

"I speak to you in her name."

"She merely asks for delay?"

"Take it as you please; but observe her order."

"The park is not the only place where we can see each other,—there are a thousand safer places. The queen has even come to your house!"

"Monseigneur, not a word more; I carry a heavy burden, that of your secret. I feel that I have not the strength to bear it a long time. What your indiscretions, chance, or an enemy's malevolence will not effect, remorse will accomplish. I believe her capable, you see, of confessing everything to the king in a moment of despair."

"Good God! is it possible?" cried Monsieur de Rohan, "would she do that?"

"If you should see her, you would pity her."

The cardinal rose precipitately. "What shall I do?" he said.

"Give her the consolation of silence."

"She would think that I had forgotten her."

Jeanne shrugged her shoulders.

"She would accuse me of being a coward."

"When your purpose is to save her? — never!"

"Does a woman pardon a man who deprives her of his presence?"

X "Do not judge her as you would judge me."

"I believe her great and strong. I love her for her courage and her noble heart. Therefore she can rely on me as I rely on her. I will see her once more for the last time; she shall know all my thoughts, and what she shall determine upon after having heard me, I will fulfil as if it were a sacred vow."

Jeanne arose.

"As you please," she said. "Go, only you will go alone. I threw the key of the park gate into the Seine as I returned this morning. You will therefore go when you please to Versailles, while I shall set out for Switzerland or Holland. The farther I shall be from the bomb, the less I shall fear when it bursts."

"Countess! you would desert me; you would abandon me! Oh, my God! with whom can I talk about her?"

"Have you not the park and the echoes?" said Jeanne; "you can soon teach them the name of Amaryllis."

"Countess, have pity! I am in despair," said the prelate.

"Well," replied Jeanne, with the brutal energy of a surgeon who decides upon the amputation of a limb; "if you are in despair, Monsieur de Rohan, do not indulge in follies more dangerous than powder, than the plague, than death! If you care so much for this woman, preserve her instead of ruining her; and if you are not altogether deficient in heart and memory, do not risk engulfing in your

own ruin those friends who have been devoted to you. But I myself will not play with fire. Will you swear to me that you will not try to see the queen? Not even to see her, you hear, — I do not say speak to her, — for the next fifteen days? If you will swear this, I will remain and may still be of service to you. Are you determined to brave everything, to disregard my prohibition and hers? I shall know it, and ten minutes later I shall set out! You will have to extricate yourself without my aid."

"It is terrible," murmured the cardinal; "the fall from so high a degree of happiness is crushing. Oh, it will kill me!"

"Come, now," whispered Jeanne in his ear, "your love is only self-love."

"To-day it is true love," replied the cardinal.

"Then you must suffer to-day," said Jeanne; "it is one of the conditions of true love. Come, Monseigneur, decide, shall I stay here, or must I start for Lausanne?"

"Remain, Countess, but find me a soothing balm. The wound is too painful."

"Do you swear to obey me?"

"On the honor of a Rohan!"

"Good! your soothing balm is found. I forbid interviews, but I do not forbid letters."

"Really!" cried the madman, reanimated by this hope; "I may write?"

"Try it."

"And — she will answer me?"

"I will endeavor to prevail upon her."

The cardinal covered Jeanne's hand with kisses. He called her his tutelary angel. The demon inhabiting the heart of the countess must have laughed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE NIGHT.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon of the same day when a man on horse-back stopped on the outskirts of the park, behind Apollo's Baths. The cavalier was riding at a leisurely pace, as if for his own pleasure; he was thoughtful as Hippolytus, and as handsome, and allowed the reins to hang loosely over the neck of his horse.

He stopped at the very same place where for the last three days Monsieur de Rohan had fastened his horse. The ground in this place was trampled by horses' feet, and the bushes which grew around the oak-tree to which the bridle was tied, were broken.

The cavalier alighted. "This place seems to have been well-trampled," he said; and he approached the wall. "Somebody has been climbing the wall; here is a gate that has been recently opened. It is just as I thought.

"No man can have been engaged in wars with the Indians of the savannas without having learned how to distinguish the tracks of horses and men. Now it is fifteen days since Monsieur de Charny returned; for fifteen days Monsieur de Charny has not allowed himself to be seen. This is the gate which Monsieur de Charny has chosen, through which to make his entrance into Versailles." Saying these words the cavalier sighed as if his soul were being drawn from his body.

"Let us leave our neighbor his happiness," he murmured, looking at one of those eloquent tracks left upon

the grass and walls. "That which God gives to some, he refuses to others. It is not without some design that God makes some men happy, others miserable; blessed be his will!

"Yet I must have a proof. At what price, by what means can it be gained?

"Oh, nothing more simple. In the bushes, in the night, a man would not be discovered, and from his hiding-place he could see those who would come here. To-night I will be in the bushes."

The cavalier took up his horse's reins, slowly regained his saddle, and without hastening the pace of his horse disappeared around a corner of the wall.

As to Charny, obedient to the orders of the queen, he had shut himself up in his own house awaiting a message from her. Night came, but nobody appeared. Charny instead of watching at the window of the lodge which looked on the park, was watching in the same room, but at another window which looked on the narrow street. The queen had said, "at the door of the huntsman's lodge;" but on the ground-floor, window and door were the same thing. The main thing was to see all that might happen. He looked out into the dark night, hoping every minute to hear the galloping of a horse or the hurried step of a courier. He heard a clock striking half-past ten. Nothing happened. The queen, then, had deceived him. She had made a concession at the first moment of surprise. In her shame she had promised what it had been impossible to fulfil; and, horrible to think, she had promised knowing that she could not perform.

Charny, with that readiness to suspect which characterizes men who are violently in love, began to reproach himself with having been too credulous. "How could

I," he cried, — "I who had seen, — believe such falsehoods, and yield my conviction, my certainty, to a stupid hope?"

He was enlarging with rage upon this fatal idea when the noise made by a handful of sand thrown upon the panes of the other window attracted his attention, and made him rush to look out upon the side toward the park. He saw then in the avenue of elms, enveloped in a large black cloak, the figure of a woman who raised toward him a pale and agitated face. He could not restrain a cry of joy mingled with regret. The woman who was waiting for him, who called him, was the queen! With one bound he reached the place where the queen was standing, and fell at her feet.

"Ah, you are here, Monsieur! it is fortunate," said the queen, in a low and agitated tone; "what were you doing?"

"You! you, Madame! — you yourself! is it possible?" replied Charny, prostrating himself.

"Is this the way you were waiting for me?"

"I was looking for you on the street side, Madame."

"Was I likely to come by the street, when it is so easy to come by the park?"

"I hardly dared hope to see you, Madame," said Charny, with an accent of passionate gratitude.

She interrupted him. "Let us not stay here," she said; "it is too light. Have you your sword?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Tis well. Where did those persons enter whom you saw?"

"By this gate."

"And at what hour?"

"At midnight, on each occasion."

"There is no reason why they should not come again to-night. You have spoken to no one?"

"To no one."

"Let us go into the shrubbery and wait."

"Oh, your Majesty —"

The queen went first. "You must know," she said suddenly, as if anticipating Charny's thoughts, "that I have not amused myself with telling this story to the lieutenant of police. Since I have made a complaint, Monsieur de Crosne should have done me justice. If the creature who usurps my name after having usurped my likeness has not yet been arrested, if all this mystery is not cleared up, you will see that there may be two reasons: either the incapacity of Monsieur de Crosne, — which is of no importance, — or his collusion with my enemies. Now, it seems to me difficult to believe that here, in my own park, any persons should dare to play the ignoble comedy which you have described to me, unless they were sure of direct aid, or tacit complicity. That is my reason for thinking that those who are guilty are so dangerous that I ought myself to assume the task of unmasking them. What do you think about it?"

"I ask your Majesty's permission to say no more on this subject. I am in despair; I have still fears, but I have no longer any suspicions."

"At least you are an honest man," said the queen, eagerly; "you can speak frankly. It is a merit which may wound the innocent if one makes a mistake with regard to them; but the wound that it inflicts is one that can be healed."

"Oh, Madame, it is striking eleven; I tremble."

"Assure yourself that there is no one here," said the queen.

Charny obeyed. He went through all the shrubbery even as far as the walls. "There is no one," he said when he returned.

"Where did the scene take place which you described to me?"

"Madame, just now, as I returned from my exploration, my heart received a terrible blow. I perceived you in the same place where, for the last three nights, I saw — the false queen of France."

"Here!" cried the queen, moving away with disgust from the place where she was standing.

"Under this chestnut-tree, yes, Madame."

"Why, then, Monsieur," said Marie Antoinette, "let us not stay here; for if they came to this spot, they will probably return here."

Charny followed the queen into another avenue. His heart beat so violently that he was afraid he should not hear the noise of the gate in opening. She, silent and proud, waited until the living proof of her innocence should appear.

The clocks announced the hour of midnight. The gate did not open. A half-hour passed, during which Marie Antoinette asked Charny more than ten times if the impostors had been very punctual to their time of meeting.

Three-quarters past midnight struck from the belfry of Saint Louis at Versailles. The queen stamped her foot with impatience. "You see that they will not come to-night," she said. "Such misfortunes happen only to me!" and saying these words, she looked at Charny as if she would quarrel with him had she surprised in his eyes the slightest sign of triumph or irony. But he, growing pale in proportion as his suspicions returned, maintained an attitude so grave and so melancholy that certainly his face reflected at that moment a patience serene as that of martyrs and angels.

The queen took his arm and led him to the chestnut-

tree under which they had stood at first. "You said," she murmured, "that it was here that you saw them?"

"In this very place, Madame."

"It was here that the woman gave him a rose?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

The queen was so weak, so weary with her long stay in this damp park, that she leaned against the trunk of a tree, and let her head fall on her breast. Insensibly her limbs gave way; Charny did not offer her his arm, and to save herself from falling, she seated herself hastily upon the grassy turf. Charny stood, as before, motionless and gloomy.

The queen put both her hands to her face, and Charny could not see the tear which was rolling down between her long, white fingers. Suddenly raising her head, "Monsieur," she said, "you are right; I am condemned. I had promised to prove to-night that you had calumniated me; God does not wish it, — I bow to his will."

"Madame —" murmured Charny.

"I have done what no other woman would have done. I do not speak of queens. Oh, Monsieur, what is a queen who cannot rule even one heart? What is a queen who cannot obtain even the esteem of an honest man? Come, Monsieur, help me to rise that I may go away; do not scorn me to the extent of refusing the assistance of your hand."

Charny threw himself like a madman on his knees. "Madame," he said, striking his head upon the ground, "if I were not a miserable man who loves you, you would pardon me, would you not?"

"You!" cried the queen, with a bitter smile, — "you! you love me, and yet you think me an infamous woman!"

"Oh, Madame!"

"You, you who ought to have a memory, you accuse me of giving a flower here, there a kiss, and yonder my love to another man! Monsieur, no falsehood; you do not love me!"

"Madame, that phantom was there, — that phantom of an amorous queen. Here where I am was the phantom of the lover. Tear out my heart, since those two infernal images live in my heart and devour it!"

She took his hand and drew him toward her with a gesture of excitement. "You saw! you heard! It was certainly I, was it not?" she said in a choking voice. "Oh, it was I! do not try to think otherwise. Well, then, if in this very place, under this very chestnut-tree, seated as I was, you at my feet as was that other, if I press your hands, if I draw you to me, if I take you in my arms, if I say to you, — I, who you say did all this to another; I, who said the same thing to another, did I not? — if I say to you, 'Monsieur de Charny, I have loved, I do love, I shall love but one being in the world, — and you are that one!' my God! my God! would not that be sufficient to convince you that a woman is not infamous who has within her heart, together with the blood of empresses, the divine fire of a love like that?"

Charny uttered a groan like that of a man about to expire. The queen's impassioned words had intoxicated him; he had felt her burning hand upon his shoulder, her warm breast upon his heart, her breath upon his lips. "Let me thank God!" he murmured. "Oh, if I did not think of God, I should think too much of you!"

She arose slowly; she fixed upon him her eyes swimming in tears.

"Will you have my life?" he said, beside himself.

She looked at him silently for a moment. "Give me your arm," she said, "and take me to every place where

the others went. In the first place, here,—here a rose was given — ”

She drew from her dress a rose, still warm from the fire which had burned in her breast. “Take it!” she said.

He inhaled the sweet odor of the flower, and pressed it to his heart.

“Here that other one gave her hand to be kissed?”

“Both her hands!” said Charny. He shook with excitement on finding his face enclosed in the queen’s burning hands.

“Thus is this place purified,” said the queen, with an adorable smile. “Now, did they not go to Apollo’s Baths?”

Charny paused, stupefied, half-dead, as if the heavens had fallen.

“It is a place,” the queen said gayly, “which I enter only in the daytime. Let us go together to see the gate through which this lover fled from the queen.”

Joyous, tripping, leaning on the arm of a man the happiest God had ever blessed, she crossed, almost running, the grass-plots which separated the shrubbery from the wall around the park. In this way they reached the gate behind which were tracks of horses’ feet.

“It was here, on the other side.”

“I have all the keys,” replied the queen. “Open the gate, Monsieur de Charny, let us investigate.”

They went outside and looked about them; the moon just then came out from a cloud as if to aid them in their investigations. Its white light seemed to cling tenderly to the beautiful face of the queen, who was leaning on Charny’s arm while she listened and examined the bushes which surrounded them. When she had satisfied herself that no one was there, she withdrew within the gate, drawing Charny toward her with a gentle pressure. The

gate closed behind them just as the clocks were striking two. "Adieu," she said. "Return home. Till to-morrow." She pressed his hand, and without another word disappeared under the elms in the direction of the palace.

On the other side of that gate they had just closed, a man rose from among the bushes, and vanished in the wood on the side of the road. This man carried with him the secret of the queen.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FAREWELL.

THE queen, next morning, looking bright and beautiful, left her apartment to go to Mass. Her guards had received orders to admit every one.

It was Sunday, and her Majesty on waking had said, "What a beautiful day! living is a pleasure to-day." She seemed to enjoy more than usual the perfume of her favorite flowers; the gifts she bestowed were more magnificent than usual; she seemed more eager for her daily communion with God. She listened to the service with intense devotion; she had never bowed so humbly her majestic head.

While she was fervently praying, the crowd was gathering along the passage from the apartments to the chapel, — as was usual on Sunday, — and even the steps of the staircase were filled with gentlemen and ladies. Among these last shone Madame de La Motte, modestly, but elegantly dressed.

In the double line of gentlemen on the right, Monsieur de Charny was seen, who was receiving many congratulations on his restoration to health, on his return, and especially on his radiant looks.

Favor is a subtle perfume; it is diffused with such facility through the air that real connoisseurs can distinguish its aroma even before the bottle is opened. Olivier had been the queen's friend for only six hours, and every one already called himself the friend of Olivier.

While he was accepting all these felicitations with the gracious manner of a really happy man, and while, as a mark of respect and friendship, all those in the left line passed over to the right, Olivier, compelled to cast his eyes here and there over the group which hovered around him, observed in front of him a face whose gloomy paleness impressed him in the midst of his exaltation. He recognized Philippe de Taverney, in his uniform closed to his chin, and with his hand upon the hilt of his sword.

Since the visits of politeness paid by the latter in his adversary's antechamber after the duel, and since the seclusion of Charny by Doctor Louis, there had been no intercourse between the rivals.

Charny, on seeing Philippe, who was looking at him quietly, without any expression either of kindness or menace, was the first to bow, and his salutation was returned by Philippe in a distant manner. Then, clearing a way through the group around him, "Pardon, gentlemen," said Olivier, "but allow me to perform a polite obligation," and crossing the space between the right and left lines, he came straight to Philippe, who did not stir.

"Monsieur de Taverney," said Charny, bowing even more politely than before, "I should have thanked you for your kind interest in regard to my health, but I arrived only yesterday."

Philippe colored, and looked at him, then cast down his eyes.

"I shall have the honor, Monsieur," continued Charny, "of paying you a visit soon, and I hope that you bear me no ill-will."

"None, Monsieur," replied Philippe.

Charny was just about to extend his hand to Philippe, when the drum announced the queen's approach.

"The queen is coming, Monsieur," said Philippe, slowly,

without making any return to Charny's friendly gesture; and he accompanied his words with a reverence which expressed melancholy rather than coldness.

Charny, rather surprised, hastened to rejoin his friends in the line on the right. Philippe remained on the left as if he were a sentinel.

The queen drew near. She was seen to smile upon several persons, and to receive through her attendants the petitions which were presented to her; for she had perceived Charny in the distance, and fixing her eyes upon him, with that fearless courage which she always displayed in her friendships, and which her enemies called immodesty, she said quite loud, "Ask to-day, gentlemen; ask, I cannot refuse anything to-day."

Charny was moved to the very depths of his heart by both the tone and the meaning of these magic words. He trembled with pleasure, which was his only expression of thanks to the queen.

Suddenly the latter was aroused from her pleasant but dangerous contemplation by the sound of a step, by the tones of a strange voice. The step resounded on the pavement at her right, the voice, agitated but grave, said, "Madame!"

The queen perceived Philippe; she could not repress at first a movement of surprise at finding herself thus placed between these two men, of whom she reproached herself perhaps with loving one too little, and the other too much. "You, Monsieur de Taverney," she cried, recovering herself, — "you! you have something to ask of me? Oh, speak!"

"An audience of ten minutes at your Majesty's leisure," said Philippe, without relaxing the severity of his countenance.

"This very moment, Monsieur," replied the queen, cast-

ing a furtive glance at Charny, whom she involuntarily dreaded to see in so close proximity with his old adversary; "follow me," and she went on more rapidly when she heard Philippe's step closely following her own, and had left Charny standing with the rest. She continued, however, gathering in her harvest of letters and petitions, issued some orders, and entered her apartment. A quarter of an hour later, Philippe was admitted to the library, where her Majesty was accustomed to receive on Sunday.

"Ah, Monsieur de Taverney, come in," said the queen, playfully, — "come in and assume for me a more smiling countenance. I must confess I am anxious every time a Taverney desires to speak to me. Your family is one of ill-omen. Reassure me quickly, Monsieur de Taverney, by telling me that you have not come to announce some misfortune."

Philippe, more pallid after this introduction than he had been during the scene with Charny, seeing how little feeling the queen manifested in what she said, confined himself to replying, "Madame, I have the honor to declare to your Majesty that this time I bring only good news."

"Ah, you have news for me!" said the queen.

"Alas, yes, your Majesty."

"Ah!" she replied, resuming that gay demeanor which made Philippe so miserable, "there, you have said, 'alas!' 'Unhappy that I am!' a Spaniard would say. Monsieur de Taverney has said, 'Alas!'"

"Madame," replied Philippe, gravely, "a few words will fully assure your Majesty that your noble brow will not be clouded this day at the approach of a Taverney, and also that you will never again be troubled by the fault of a Taverney-Maison-Rouge. From this very day, Madame,

the last of this family, to whom your Majesty had deigned to accord some favor, is about to disappear, never again to return to the court of France."

The queen, casting aside the playful air which she had assumed as a resource against the emotions which would probably be excited during this interview, exclaimed, "You are going away!"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"You — too!"

Philippe bowed. "My sister, Madame, has already left your Majesty with regret," he said; "as for myself, I was always useless to the queen, therefore I am going."

The queen seated herself, much agitated by reflecting that Andrée had asked that final leave of absence on the day following the queen's interview with Charny in Louis's apartment, when he had received the first indication of her feeling toward him. "Strange!" she murmured thoughtfully, and did not add another word.

Philippe remained standing like a marble statue, awaiting his dismissal.

The queen, rousing all at once from her lethargy, said, "Where are you going?"

"I intend rejoining Monsieur de Lapeyrouse," said Philippe.

"Monsieur de Lapeyrouse is at Newfoundland," observed the queen.

"I have prepared everything to join him."

"You know that a frightful death has been predicted for him?"

"Frightful? I did not know that; but I was aware that it was to be sudden."

"And you will go?"

"It is for that reason that I wish to rejoin Lapeyrouse," he said, with a sweet and dignified smile.

The queen once more relapsed into her agitated silence.

Philippe still waited respectfully.

The brave and noble nature of Marie Antoinette was aroused, more fearless than ever. She arose, approached the young man, and said to him, folding her arms upon her breast, "Why do you go away?"

"Because I have a great desire to travel," he replied gently.

"But you have already made a tour of the world," replied the queen, deceived for a moment by his heroic calmness.

"Of the New World, yes, Madame," continued Philippe; "but not of the Old and New together."

The queen made a gesture of impatience, and repeated what she had said to Andrée. "These Taverneys are a race of iron, and have hearts of steel. Your sister and you, you are two terrible persons, — friends whom one must finally hate. You are going away, not for the sake of travelling, — you are really weary of that, — but to leave me. Your sister was, she said, summoned by religion; she hides a heart of fire beneath the ashes. But she wished to go, and she has gone. May God make her happy! You, you who might be happy, — you, you are going too! I told you just now that the Taverneys brought me misfortune!"

"Spare us, Madame! If your Majesty would deign to search our hearts, you would find there the most unbounded devotion."

"Listen!" cried the queen, angrily. "You are a Quaker, she a philosopher, — creatures whom it is impossible to move. She imagines the world a Paradise in which one enters only on the condition of being saints; you, you take this world for the infernal regions in which

there can be only demons; and both of you have fled from the world, — the one, because you do not find in it what you seek; the other, because you find in it what you do not seek. Am I right? Eh, my dear Monsieur de Taverney, allow human beings to be imperfect; ask of royal families to be only the least imperfect of the human race; be tolerant, or rather, do not be egotistical."

She spoke with too much passion. It gave Philippe an advantage. "Madame," said he, "egotism is a virtue when one makes use of it to increase his adoration."

The queen blushed. "I only know," she said, "that I loved Andrée, and that she left me; that I valued you, and you are going to leave me. It is humiliating to me to see two persons so perfect — I do not jest, Monsieur — abandon my house."

"Nothing can humiliate so august a personage as you," said Taverney, coldly; "shame cannot reach a head so exalted as your own."

"I am trying to think what can have wounded your feelings."

"Nothing has wounded my feelings, Madame," replied Philippe, eagerly.

"Your rank has been confirmed; you are on the high road to fortune. I have distinguished you —"

"I repeat to your Majesty that nothing at court displeases me."

"And if I should tell you to remain — if I should command you to do so?"

"I should have the sorrow of replying to your Majesty by a refusal."

The queen again had recourse to a moment of silent reserve which was to her like a break in the combat to the weary fencer. And as a home thrust always followed this moment of repose, she suddenly exclaimed, "There is

perhaps some one here who displeases you? You are easily offended, you know."

"There is no one who displeases me."

"I thought you had quarrelled — with a gentleman — Monsieur de Charny — whom you wounded in a duel," said the queen, gradually becoming more animated; "and as it is very natural to avoid those we do not like, as soon as you saw that Monsieur de Charny had returned you immediately wished to leave the court."

Philippe made no reply.

The queen, mistaken in her opinion of this man, so loyal and so brave, thought that this was only a case of ordinary jealousy. She followed him up unsparingly. "You knew only to-day," she continued, "that Monsieur had returned. I say to-day! and it is to-day that you ask for permission to retire."

Philippe turned livid rather than pale. Thus attacked, thus trampled underfoot, he avenged himself cruelly. "Madame," he said, "it is true that it is only to-day that I became aware of Monsieur de Charny's return; only I have known it longer than your Majesty thinks, for I met Monsieur de Charny at about two o'clock in the morning at the gate of the park near Apollo's Baths."

The queen became pale in her turn; and after having observed, with admiration mingled with terror, the perfect courtesy of the gentleman, even in his anger, "Well," she murmured, in a faint voice, "go, Monsieur; I will not detain you longer."

Philippe bowed for the last time, and with slow steps retired.

The queen fell overwhelmed upon her chair, saying, "France, country of noble hearts!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CARDINAL'S JEALOUSY.

THE cardinal had passed three successive nights very different from those which were constantly recurring to his imagination. No news from any one, no hope of a visit! This death-like silence, after the agitation of passion, was like the darkness of a cellar after the joyous light of the sun.

The cardinal had at first deluded himself with the hope that his lover — a woman as well as a queen — would wish to know the nature of the passion she had inspired, and whether she would still continue to please. This was a feeling quite masculine, — speaking materially, a two-edged weapon which wounded the cardinal grievously when it was turned against himself.

In fact, receiving nothing, and hearing only silence, as Monsieur Delille says, he feared — unhappy man — that test had resulted unfavorably to himself. From this thought arose an anguish, a terror, an anxiety of which no one could form an idea who has not suffered from that pervasive neuralgia which turns every nerve connected with the brain into a serpent of fire writhing or distending itself at its own free will.

This anxiety became insupportable to the cardinal; he sent ten times in one half-day to Madame de La Motte's house, and as often to Versailles.

The tenth courier at last brought back Jeanne, who at Versailles was watching Charny and the queen, and secretly congratulating herself on this impatience of the

cardinal, to which she would soon owe the success of her enterprise.

The cardinal, on seeing her, shouted, "How can you live in such tranquillity? What! you know how I am tortured, and you, who call yourself my friend, allow this torture to kill me!"

"Eh, Monseigneur," replied Jeanne, "patience, if you please. What I have been doing at Versailles is much more useful than what you have been doing here wishing for me."

"It is impossible that any one should be so cruel!" said his Excellency, somewhat appeased by the hope of obtaining news. "Come, what are they saying, what are they doing down yonder?"

"Absence is a grievous evil, whether one suffers from it at Paris, or has to bear it at Versailles."

"What you say delights me, and I thank you for it; but —"

"But?"

"The proofs!"

"Ah, good God!" cried Jeanne, "what is that you are saying, Monseigneur, — proofs! What is that word? Proofs! Would you be in your right senses, Monseigneur, to go and ask a woman for proofs of her fault?"

"I do not ask a formal document, Countess; I ask a pledge of love."

"It seems to me," she said, looking at his Excellency in a very significant manner, "that you are becoming very exacting, if not very forgetful."

"Oh, I know what you are going to say; I know that I ought to be very well satisfied, — very much honored; but judge of my heart by your own, Countess. How would you like to be thus cast aside after having obtained some appearance of favor?"

"I think you said 'appearance,'" replied Jeanne, in the same mocking tone.

"Oh, you can certainly taunt me with impunity, Countess; it is certain that I have no reason to complain; but I do complain —"

"Then, Monseigneur, I cannot be responsible for your discontent, if you have only frivolous reasons for it, or no reason at all."

"Countess, you treat me badly."

"Monseigneur, I repeat your own words. I follow your own statements."

"Take some inspiration from yourself, instead of reproaching me with my foolishness; help me instead of tormenting me."

"I cannot help you where I see nothing to be done."

"You see nothing to be done?" said the cardinal, dwelling on each word.

"Nothing."

"Well, Madame," said Monsieur de Rohan, with vehemence, "every one, perhaps, does not think as you do."

"Alas, Monseigneur, we are getting angry and no longer understand each other. Your Excellency will pardon me for saying so."

"Angry! yes — Your unkindness drives me to it, Countess."

"And you do not consider whether or not this is injustice?"

"Oh, yes; I admit that if you do not serve me any longer, it is because you cannot; I see that clearly."

"You judge me rightly; why, then, do you accuse me?"

"Because you ought to tell me the whole truth, Madame."

"The truth! I have told you what I know."

"You do not tell me that the queen is perfidious, that she is a coquette, that she leads men on to adore her, and then drives them to despair."

Jeanne looked at him in surprise. "Explain yourself," she said, trembling not with fear, but with joy. In fact, she had just discovered in the jealousy of the cardinal a method of escape — which chance might not have given her — from a very difficult position.

"Acknowledge," continued the cardinal, who could no longer control his passion, "acknowledge, I beg, that the queen refuses to see me."

"I do not say that, Monseigneur."

"Acknowledge that if she does not repel me of her own free will, she thrusts me aside, to avoid giving annoyance to some other lover, in whom my attentions have aroused suspicion."

"Ah, Monseigneur!" cried Jeanne, in a tone so sympathetic that she allowed even more to be suspected than she seemed desirous to conceal.

"Listen," said Monsieur de Rohan; "the last time I was with her Majesty I thought I heard some one moving in the thicket."

"Nonsense!"

"I will tell you what I suspect."

"Do not say another word, Monseigneur; you are insulting the queen. Besides, even if she were so unhappy as to fear the vigilance of a lover, — which I do not believe, — would you be so unjust as to impute to her as a crime a past relation which she sacrifices to you?"

"'Past!' — that is a good word; but it means nothing, Countess, if that past is still present, and is to run on into the future."

"For shame, Monseigneur! You speak as if you would accuse me of having led you into an unfortunate enter-

prise. Your suspicions, Monseigneur, are injurious to the queen, and also to me."

"Then, Countess, prove to me —"

"Ah, Monseigneur, if you repeat that word I shall think you mean to insult me."

"In short, — do you think she loves me — even a little?"

"Why, Monseigneur, you can easily find out," Jeanne replied, pointing to the table, on which were writing materials. "Sit down there and ask her yourself."

The cardinal seized Jeanne's hand in a transport of joy. "You will take to her the letter?" he asked.

"If I did not give it to her, who would?"

"And — you undertake that I shall have an answer?"

"If you had no answer how would you know what course to take?"

"Oh, now you are as I like to see you, Countess."

"Am I not?" she replied, with her subtle smile.

The cardinal sat down and began to write. He had an eloquent pen, and was a ready writer; nevertheless, he destroyed ten sheets of paper before satisfying himself.

"If you go on in that way," said Jeanne, "you will never come to an end."

"You see, Countess, I am distrustful of my tenderness, — it overflows so freely; it may weary the queen."

"Ah," replied Jeanne, ironically, "write to her like a politician, and she will reply with a diplomatic note; but it is your own affair."

"You are right, — you are a true woman in heart and mind. Stay, Countess, why should we keep a secret from you, who are acquainted with the whole affair?"

She smiled. "You have, indeed," she said, "but little to conceal from me."

"Read over my shoulder ; read as fast as I write, if you can, — for my heart is on fire, and my pen will devour the paper."

The cardinal proceeded to write a letter so ardent, so wild, so full of amorous reproaches and compromising protestations, that Jeanne, who followed his pen, said to herself, "He has written what I should not have dared to dictate to him."

The cardinal read over the letter, and said to Jeanne, "Will that do?"

"If she loves you," replied the traitress, "you will have proof of it to-morrow. Meanwhile, you can wait with a tranquil mind."

"Until to-morrow, yes."

Jeanne took the letter, sealed, allowed the cardinal to kiss her eyes, and toward evening returned home. There, after a refreshing change of costume, she sat down to think. The situation was precisely that which she had aimed to bring about. Two steps more and she would reach her goal. Who would be to her the better shield, — the queen, or the cardinal? That letter of the cardinal would render it impossible for him to accuse Madame de La Motte when the time should come for her to compel him to pay the money due for the necklace. Even if the cardinal and the queen should come to an understanding, how would they dare to destroy Madame de La Motte, the custodian of a secret so scandalous? The discussion would take place within closed doors, and Madame de La Motte, on being suspected, would make that fact a pretext for her departure, and would carry abroad the handsome fortune of a million and a half. The cardinal, indeed, would know that Jeanne had the diamonds, and the queen would suspect it ; but they would not be eager to noise abroad a matter so closely connected with that of

the park, and of Apollo's Baths. A single letter, indeed, was not sufficient foundation for that entire system of defence. However, the cardinal had good pens; he would write seven or eight more. As to the queen, it was quite possible, that, in company with Monsieur de Charny, she was preparing weapons for the use of Jeanne de La Motte.

All this trouble, and all these turnings would lead, at the worst, to flight; and Jeanne, in her meditations, anticipated the probable course of the affair. First would come the default of payment, then the denunciations of the alarmed jewellers. The queen would have recourse immediately to Monsieur de Rohan. But how? Necessarily through Jeanne's intermediation. Jeanne would warn the cardinal and summon him to pay. If he refused, she would threaten to publish his letters. He would pay. The payment made, there would be no longer any danger. In the eyes of the public there would be an intrigue to be explained; but this gave her no anxiety. A million and a half, to save the honor of a queen and of a prince of the Church, was a sum far too small. Jeanne thought she might secure three millions if she should make the effort.

Why was Jeanne so sure of herself upon the question of intrigue? Because the cardinal was certain that on three successive nights he had been with the queen in the shadowy groves of Versailles, and nothing in the world could prove to him that he had been deceived. Only one proof of the deception was in existence, and that proof Jeanne must proceed to remove.

Having reached this point in her meditations, Jeanne approached the window and saw Oliva looking anxiously and inquiringly from her balcony. "Now for us two," she thought, saluting her accomplice affectionately. She

made to Oliva the signal agreed upon that in the evening she was to come down to the street.

Overjoyed at the receipt of this communication, Oliva returned to her chamber. Jeanne resumed her meditations.

To destroy the instrument when it has served its purpose is the custom of those who engage in intrigue. But most commonly they fail, either by destroying that instrument in such a manner as to elicit from it a groan which betrays the secret, or by destroying it so incompletely that it may still serve the purposes of others. Jeanne thought that Oliva, devoted as she was to the pleasure of living, would not allow herself to be destroyed without uttering some complaint. It was necessary to invent some story which would induce her to flee of her own free will.

Difficulties arose at every step; but there are minds which take delight in overcoming difficulties.

Oliva, delighted as she was with the society of her new friend, was delighted only relatively, — that is to say, in contemplating that companionship through the windows of her prison she found it charming. But the sincere Nicole did not conceal from her friend that she would much prefer the open day, walks in the sunlight, in short all the realities of life, to these nocturnal expeditions and this fictitious royalty. Jeanne, with her caresses, was an approach to life; the realities of life were — money and Beausire.

Jeanne thoroughly understood this attitude of Oliva, and determined to draw her advantage from it. In short, the object of her approaching interview with Nicole must be to effect the complete disappearance of the only proof of the criminal deception practised in the park of Versailles.

When night came Oliva descended to the street, and Jeanne was waiting for her at the door. They went up the Rue Saint Claude to the deserted boulevard, and there took a carriage.

Oliva began by covering Jeanne with kisses, which Jeanne returned with interest.

"Oh, how tired I am!" cried Oliva; "I have longed for you, watched for you."

"Impossible, my friend, for me to come to you; it would have been too hazardous for us both."

"How so?" asked Nicole, in astonishment.

"A terrible danger, my dear, at which I shudder still."

"Oh, tell me about it quickly!"

"You know that you were weary of your confinement?"

"Alas, yes!"

"And that, for the sake of diversion, you wished to go out?"

"Yes; and in this you kindly aided me."

"You know I told you about that fool of an officer in love with the queen, to whom you bear some resemblance."

"Yes, I know that."

"I was so foolish as to propose to you that we should play a trick on that poor fellow, by making him believe that the queen returned his love."

"Alas!" sighed Oliva.

"I will not recall to you the first two walks we took at night in the garden of Versailles, in company with that poor fellow."

Oliva sighed again.

"Those two nights in which you played your part so well that our poor lover took the matter seriously."

"It was wrong, perhaps," said Oliva, in a low voice;

"for we deceived him, and he did not deserve it ; he is a charming man."

"He is, indeed ; is he not ?"

"Oh, yes."

"But wait ; we come now to the danger. To have given him a rose ; to have allowed him to say, 'your Majesty ;' to have given him your hands to kiss, — these things might pass as jokes. But, my little Oliva, it seems there was something more."

Oliva blushed so deeply that but for the darkness Jeanne must have perceived it. It is true that, intelligent woman as she was, she looked out of the window.

"What do you mean ?" stammered Nicole.

"There was a third interview," said Jeanne.

"Yes," said Oliva, hesitating ; "you must know that, since you were there."

"Your pardon, dear friend ; I was, as usual, at a distance, watching, or pretending to watch, to support the parts we were acting, so that I did not see or hear what took place in the pavilion. I know only what you told me. You told me, as we returned, that you had walked about, that you had conversed, that you had continued the play of the roses and the kissing of hands. I believe everything you told me, my dear."

"Well — but —" said Oliva, trembling.

"Well, my dear, it seems that our madman claims to have received more than the pretended queen has granted him."

"What do you mean ?"

"It seems that, intoxicated with delight, he has boasted of obtaining from the queen an indisputable proof of reciprocal passion. The poor devil is mad, decidedly."

"My God ! my God !" murmured Oliva.

"He is mad, in the first place, because he lies."

"Certainly," stammered Oliva.

"You would not have exposed yourself to so terrible a danger without telling me of it?"

Oliva shuddered from head to foot.

"How was it likely," continued the terrible friend, "that you, who love Monsieur Beausire, and have me for your friend; that you, solicited by Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro, and rejecting his attentions, — that you have wantonly given that madman the right — to — say — Oh, no; he has lost his head; there can be no question about it."

"Tell me," cried Nicole; "what is the danger? Let us see."

"It is this. We have to do with a madman, — that is to say, a man who fears nothing and is uncontrollable. If it were a matter of giving a rose, or of kissing hands, there would be nothing to say. A queen has roses in her park, and hands to offer to any of her subjects; but if it were true that at that third interview — Ah, my dear child, I can no longer laugh since that idea has entered my head."

Oliva felt her teeth grinding with terror. "What would be the consequence, my dear friend?" she asked.

"In the first place you are not the queen, — to my knowledge, at least."

"No."

"And having usurped the rank of her Majesty, to commit an — indiscretion of that kind —"

"Well?"

"Well, that is called high treason; and that means a great deal."

Oliva hid her face in her hands.

"After all," continued Jeanne, "since you have not done that of which he boasts, you will be acquitted on the

trial. The preceding indiscretions will be punished by an imprisonment of from two to four years, and by banishment."

"Prison! banishment!" cried Oliva, terrified.

"It is not an irreparable evil; but for my own part, I shall take precautions and hide myself."

"You also are anxious?"

"Of course. Will not that madman accuse me at once? Oh, my poor Oliva! it is a joke that will prove very costly to us both."

Oliva burst into tears. "And I," she said, "who can never remain quiet for a moment! Oh, restless spirit! Oh, demon! I am possessed, you see. After this misfortune I shall still rush into another."

"Do not despair; try only to avoid all public scandal."

"Oh, I will shut myself up with my protector. What if I should confess everything to him?"

"A pretty idea!—a man who is keeping you for himself, though now he hides his love,—a man who, on a word from you, will adore you,—you will acknowledge to him that you have committed this imprudence with another! I say 'imprudence,' but there is no knowing what he will suspect."

"My God! you are right."

"Furthermore, the report of this matter will get abroad, and the researches of the magistrates will suggest scruples to your protector. Perhaps to make himself acceptable to the court he will deliver you to the officers."

"Oh!"

"Suppose that he should only drive you from his house,—what would become of you?"

"I see that I am lost."

"And Monsieur de Beausire, when he shall be informed

of the affair—" said Jeanne slowly, watching for the effect of this last blow.

Oliva jumped up, and striking with her head the roof of the carriage demolished her head-dress by the contact. "He will kill me! Oh, no," she murmured, "I will kill myself!" Then, turning toward Jeanne, "You cannot save me," she said despairingly, "since you also are in danger!"

"I have," Jeanne replied, "in the interior of Picardy a bit of land,—a farm. If one could gain that refuge secretly, before the matter comes to light, perhaps there would be a chance—"

"But that madman,—he knows you, and would manage somehow to find you."

"Oh, if you were once out of the way, hidden, undiscoverable, I should no longer fear the madman! I should say to him boldly, 'You are a fool to affirm such things! Prove them!' That would be impossible to him. Then I should say to him, quietly, 'You are a coward!'"

"I will set out when and whither you please," said Oliva.

"I think it would be prudent," replied Jeanne.

"Is it best to start immediately?"

"No; wait till I have arranged everything. Do not show yourself even to me. Disguise yourself even to your mirror."

"Yes, yes; you may depend on me, dear friend."

"And for a beginning, let us return; we have nothing more to say."

"Yes; let us return. How much time will you need for your preparations?"

"I do not know,—but listen: from now till the day of your departure I shall not show myself at the window.

When you see me there, understand that the day has arrived, and be ready."

"I will. Thank you, my dear friend!"

They returned slowly toward the Rue Saint Claude, — Oliva not daring to speak another word, and Jeanne meditating too deeply to speak to Oliva. On arriving they embraced each other, and Oliva asked her friend's pardon for all the trouble she had caused by her foolishness.

"I am a woman," replied Madame de La Motte, parodying the Latin poet, "and am familiar with all woman's weakness!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLIGHT.

WHAT Jeanne and Oliva had promised they respectively performed. From the next morning Nicole had completely concealed her existence from all the world; no one could suspect that she inhabited that house in the Rue Saint Claude. She remained hidden behind a curtain, or behind a screen, and kept her windows closed, notwithstanding the heat of the weather.

Jeanne, who was making her preparations, — knowing that on the next day the default of the first payment of five hundred thousand francs would occur, — arranged everything in such a manner as to leave no point exposed to danger from the explosion which would ensue. That terrible moment she kept in view in all her observations. She had considered the alternative of flight; but flight would be strong evidence against her. She had determined to remain motionless as a duellist after receiving his adversary's blow, — to remain, with the chance of falling, but also with the chance of killing the enemy. With this purpose in view, on the day after her interview with Oliva, she showed herself at the window, at about two o'clock, to announce to the pretended queen that she must be ready to start that evening.

It would be impossible to describe Oliva's condition of mingled joy and terror. The necessity of flight signified danger; the possibility of flight signified safety. She threw an eloquent kiss to Jeanne, and then made her

final preparations, putting into her little bundle some of the costly things belonging to her protector.

Jeanne, after her signal, went out to procure a carriage to which she should commit the valuable destiny of Mademoiselle Nicole.

At eleven o'clock on the following night Jeanne entered the Rue Saint Louis in a post-chaise drawn by three strong horses. Upon the box was a man wrapped in a cloak, who showed the postilion which way to go. At the corner of the Rue du Roi-Doré, Jeanne pulled the man's cloak, and the carriage was stopped. The man got down to speak to the mistress.

"Let the carriage remain here, my dear Monsieur Reteau," said Jeanne. "A half-hour will be enough. I will bring here some one who will get into the carriage, and whom you will convey, paying double fees to the postilions, to my little house near Amiens."

"Yes, Madame la Comtesse."

"There you will commit this person to the care of my farmer, Fontaine, who will know what is to be done."

"Yes, Madame."

"I forgot — You are armed, my dear Reteau?"

"Yes, Madame."

"This lady is threatened by a madman. Perhaps an attempt will be made to stop her."

"What shall I do?"

"You will shoot down any one who may attempt to obstruct your course."

"Yes, Madame."

"You asked me for a payment of twenty louis for the affair you know about. I will give you a hundred, and will pay the expenses of your journey to London, where you may see me within three months."

"Yes, Madame."

"Here are the hundred louis. I probably shall not see you here again, for it will be prudent for you to go to Saint Valery, and embark immediately for England."

"You may rely on me."

"It is for your sake."

"It is for us," said Monsieur Reteau, kissing the countess's hand. "I am to wait here, then?"

"Yes; and I will go to bring the lady."

Reteau got into the chaise which Jeanne had vacated, while she with rapid steps hurried to the Rue Saint Claude, and entered her apartment. All was quiet in the neighborhood. Jeanne lighted the candle which, raised above the balcony, was to be the signal for Oliva to descend.

"She is a prudent girl," said the countess to herself, on seeing that Oliva's window remained darkened.

Jeanne raised and lowered her candle three times. There was no response. But she seemed to hear something like a sigh, or a "Yes," thrown almost inaudibly upon the air from under the foliage that surrounded the window.

"She will go down without showing a light," thought Jeanne, — "not a bad idea;" and she herself went down into the street.

The door did not open. Oliva had doubtless encumbered herself with some heavy and troublesome packages.

"The fool," said the countess, grumbling, "how much time she is wasting over her rubbish!"

No one came. Jeanne went over to the opposite door and listened, with her ear close to the large-headed iron nails which studded the door. Still no sound. A quarter of an hour passed in this way; the clocks chimed half-past eleven.

Jeanne walked to the boulevard to see from a distance if the windows were lighted. She thought that she could

perceive through the interstices in the foliage a glimmer of light which seemed to come from under the double curtains.

"What is she doing? My God, what can the wretched little thing be about! She did not see the signal, perhaps. Come, we must take courage; let us go up again," and in fact, she again ascended to her own apartment in order to try once more her telegraph of candles. But there was no answer to her signal.

"It must be," said Jeanne, crumpling her ruffles with rage, — "it must be that the hussy is ill and cannot move. Oh, but what does that matter? Living or dead, she must be off to-night."

She again descended her staircase with the swiftness of a hunted lioness. She held in her hand the key which had procured for Oliva so many times the liberty of taking her nocturnal ramble.

Just as she was slipping this key into the lock, she paused. "What if there should be any one up there with her?" thought the countess. "Impossible! I should hear voices, and there would be time to go back. What if I should meet any one upon the staircase — oh!" and she was upon the point of retreating at thought of this danger. The sound of her horses' feet pawing the pavement decided her. "Nothing great is accomplished without danger," she said; "with boldness, danger is avoided." She turned the key in the enormous lock, and the door opened.

Jeanne was acquainted with the localities; her intelligence would have revealed them to her, even if she had not already learned them while waiting for Oliva in the evenings. Jeanne rushed up the stairs which were on the left. There was no noise, no light, no person about.

When she reached the landing-place of Nicole's apart-

ment, she saw under the door a luminous ray; behind the door could be heard the sound of an agitated step.

Jeanne, holding her breath, listened. There was no conversation; Oliva was therefore alone, walking about, preparing for her departure probably. She was not ill certainly, and the only misfortune that had arisen was a slight delay.

Jeanne gently scratched on the door. "Oliva! Oliva!" she said, "my dear little friend!" The step was approaching. "Open! open!" said Jeanne, hurriedly.

The door was thrown open, a deluge of light inundated Jeanne, who found herself standing before a man carrying in his hand a three-branched candlestick. She uttered a fearful scream, and hid her face in her mantle.

"Oliva!" said this man, "is it not you?" and he gently removed the mantle of the countess. "Madame la Comtesse de La Motte!" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise wonderfully natural.

"Monsieur de Cagliostro!" murmured Jeanne, staggering and almost fainting.

Among all the dangers Jeanne had imagined, she had not thought of this. And this did not seem at first to be very terrible; but on reflecting a moment, and observing the gloomy appearance of that strange man, and his air of profound dissimulation, the danger began to seem frightful to her. She was almost beside herself with fear. She recoiled, and felt an impulse to throw herself down the staircase. Cagliostro politely extended his hand, and invited her to a seat. "To what am I indebted for the honor of your visit, Madame?" he asked in a firm voice.

"Monsieur," stammered the intriguing woman, who could not withdraw her eyes from those of the count, "I came — I was seeking —"

"Allow me to ring, Madame, that I may have those of

my servants punished who had the awkwardness, the rudeness, to allow a woman of your rank to present herself thus alone."

Jeanne, trembling, arrested the count's movement.

"It must be," he continued calmly, "that you happened on that rogue of a German who is sometimes intoxicated. He probably did not know you, but opened the door in a stupor and immediately went to sleep again."

"Do not scold him, I beg of you, Monsieur," said Jeanne, speaking more freely, and without suspicion of the snare laid for her.

"It was he, in fact, who opened the door to you, was it not, Madame?"

"I think it was. But you promise me not to scold him?"

"Yes, and I will keep my word," said the count, with a smile. "Now, Madame, will you have the goodness to explain —"

Jeanne, now that she thought she was not suspected of opening the door herself, could lie with confidence concerning the object of her visit.

"I came," she said quickly, "to confer with you, Monsieur le Comte, in regard to certain rumors that are going about."

"What rumors, Madame?"

"Do not urge me, I entreat," she said, with affectation; "the course I am taking is delicate —"

"Search! search!" thought Cagliostro; "as for myself, I have already found."

"You are a friend of his Eminence Monseigneur le Cardinal de Rohan?" said Jeanne.

"Ah! ah!" thought Cagliostro, "go to the end of the thread I hold; but you shall go no farther." Then aloud, "I am in fact on quite good terms with his Eminence."

"And I came," said Jeanne, "to seek information from you about —"

"About?" said Cagliostro, with a slight tone of irony.

"I have told you that my position is delicate, Monsieur; do not take advantage of it. You must know that Monsieur de Rohan has shown me some affection, and I wished to know how far I may count — In short, Monsieur, it is said that you can read the most hidden thoughts and sentiments."

"I need a little more light, Countess, to read what is hidden in your mind."

"Monsieur, it is said that his Eminence loves another; that he is in love with a woman of exalted rank. It is even said —"

Here Cagliostro fixed his eyes, flashing with an angry light, on Jeanne, who almost sank beneath his gaze. "Madame, I do indeed read your mind; but to read more clearly I need some assistance. Will you please answer a few questions?"

"How do you happen to come here to consult with me? I do not live here."

Jeanne shuddered.

"How did you get into the house? For there is neither drunken German nor servant of any kind in this part of the hôtel."

"And if it was not myself whom you came to see, whom, then, did you expect to find?"

"You do not answer? Well, I will assist you. You entered the house by means of a key which you have now in your pocket. You came to seek a young woman whom I, out of sheer kindness, was sheltering in my house."

Jeanne was completely unbalanced, like a tree torn up by the roots. "And if that be so," she said, in a low

voice, "what crime have I committed? Is not a woman permitted to visit a woman? Call her; she will tell you whether our friendship is one that may not be acknowledged."

"Madame," interrupted Cagliostro, "you say that because you know she is not here."

"Not here!" cried Jeanne, alarmed. "Oliva no longer here?"

"Oh," said Cagliostro, "you are perhaps ignorant of her departure, — you, who aided in her abduction!"

"Her abduction! I! I!" cried Jeanne, with some renewal of confidence. "She has been carried away, and you accuse me?"

"I do more, — I convict you," said Cagliostro.

"What is your proof?" asked the countess, with assurance.

Cagliostro took a paper from the table and showed it to her. It was a note addressed to Cagliostro, and read as follows: —

"MONSIEUR AND GENEROUS PROTECTOR, — Forgive me for leaving you. But before all things I love Monsieur de Beausire. He has come for me, — he takes me away; I follow him. Adieu. Receive the expression of my gratitude."

"Beausire!" said Jeanne, petrified. "Beausire! — who did not know Oliva's address!"

"Oh, yes, Madame," replied Cagliostro, showing her a second paper, which he drew from his pocket. "See, I picked this up on the staircase when I came to make my daily visit. It must have fallen from Monsieur de Beausire's pocket."

The countess read, trembling —

"Monsieur de Beausire will find Mademoiselle Oliva in the Rue Saint Claude, at the corner of the boulevard. He will

find her, and take her away immediately. It is a very sincere friend who gives him this advice. There is no time to be lost."

"Oh!" said the countess, crushing the paper in her hands.

"And he has carried her off," said Cagliostro, coldly.

"But who wrote him that letter?" asked Jeanne.

"You, apparently, — you, Oliva's sincere friend."

"But how could he enter here?" cried Jeanne, looking angrily at her impassive interlocutor.

"Cannot one enter by using your key?"

"But since I have it Monsieur de Beausire cannot have it."

"If a person has one key, he may perhaps have two," replied Cagliostro, looking at her intently.

"You have there convincing documents," answered the countess, speaking slowly, "while I have only suspicions."

"Oh, I have suspicions too," said Cagliostro, "as serious as yours." As he said these words he dismissed her by a gesture almost imperceptible.

The countess began to descend the stairs. The entire length of the stairway, which when she arrived was dark and deserted, was now illuminated by the light of twenty candles, held by twenty lackeys, before whom Cagliostro called aloud, and with many repetitions, the name of Madame la Comtesse de La Motte.

Jeanne departed breathing fury and vengeance, as the basilisk breathes fire and poison.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LETTER AND THE RECEIPT.

THE next day was the day appointed in the queen's letter to the jewellers for the first payment on account of the necklace ; and since in that letter her Majesty had enjoined circumspection, they waited in quiet expectation of their five hundred thousand francs, and had a receipt for it written out in the most elegant handwriting that the house could command.

The receipt was not called for. That night the jewellers spent in cruel anxiety and suspense. They reflected that the queen had extraordinary ideas, and she had need of secrecy, — so that perhaps her messenger would not arrive until after midnight.

The coming of the dawn destroyed their chimerical hopes. They took a carriage and drove to Versailles. While Bossange remained in the carriage Boehmer sought to gain admission to the queen. He was informed that, not having a letter of audience, he could not enter. Dismayed and anxious, he insisted, and since he had on several occasions prudently placed here and there among the officers of the antechambers several small articles of value, they contrived to place him where the queen would see him on returning from her walk.

Marie Antoinette, quivering yet with emotion as she recalled that interview with Charny in which she had confessed her love without becoming his mistress, was returning with her heart full of gladness, when she per-

ceived the anxious face of Boehmer, who stood respectfully awaiting her approach.

She gave him a smile, which he interpreted in the most favorable manner, and he ventured to ask for a moment's audience, which the queen promised to give him at two o'clock, — that is, after her dinner. He took the good news to Bossange, who was waiting in the carriage, and who, suffering from a swelled face, did not like to present himself before the queen.

"There is no doubt," they said, while commenting on every word and every gesture of Marie Antoinette, "that her Majesty has in her drawer the sum which she could not obtain yesterday; she has appointed two o'clock because at that hour she will be alone." And they asked each other, as do the companions in the fable, if they should take the amount in notes, in gold, or in silver.

At two o'clock the jeweller was at his post, and was admitted to her Majesty's boudoir.

"What is it now, Boehmer," said the queen, as soon as she perceived him, "do you want to talk of jewels? You are unfortunate in that way, you know."

Boehmer thought that there must be some one concealed in the room and that the queen was afraid of being heard. He assumed therefore an air of intelligence, and looking all around, he replied, "Yes, Madame."

"What are you looking about in that way for?" said the queen, in surprise. "You have some secret, have you?"

He did not answer, being rather shocked by this dissimulation.

"The same secret as before, — a jewel to sell," continued the queen; "something incomparable? Oh, do not be alarmed, — there is no one to hear us."

"Then —" murmured Boehmer.

"Well, what?"

"Then I may say to your Majesty —"

"Say it quickly, my good Boehmer."

The jeweller drew near with a propitiating smile. "I may say to your Majesty that the queen forgot us yesterday," he said.

"Forgot you! in what way?" said the queen, in surprise.

"Why, yesterday — was the date —"

"The date! what date?"

"Oh, I beg pardon, your Majesty, if I allow myself — I know very well that there is some indiscretion. Perhaps the queen is not prepared. That would be a great misfortune, but, in short —"

"Really, Boehmer," cried the queen, "I do not understand a word of what you say to me. Explain yourself, my good friend."

"Your Majesty has, then, lost all recollection of the matter; which is very natural in the midst of so many preoccupations."

"Recollection of what? — I ask once more."

"Yesterday was the day for the first payment on the necklace," said Boehmer, timidly.

"You have sold your necklace, then?" said the queen.

"Why," said Boehmer, looking at her in astonishment, "it seems to me we have."

"And those to whom you sold it have not paid you, my poor Boehmer? So much the worse. They must do as I have done; not being able to pay for the necklace, they must return it to you, leaving you the amount paid on account."

"What does your Majesty say?" stammered the jeweller, who staggered like an imprudent traveller who receives a sunstroke.

"I say, my poor Boehmer, that if ten successive purchasers should return your necklace as I returned it, each leaving you a bonus of two hundred thousand francs, that would give you two millions in addition to the necklace."

"Your Majesty," cried Boehmer, "says that you really returned the necklace?"

"Why, yes, I say so," replied the queen, calmly. "What is the trouble?"

"What!" continued the jeweller, "your Majesty never bought the necklace?"

"Now, what farce is this we are playing?" said the queen, severely. "Is this miserable necklace destined always to deprive people of their senses?"

"Why," said Boehmer, trembling from head to foot, "it seemed to me that I heard from your Majesty's own lips that you had *returned* — your Majesty said *RETURNED* — the diamond necklace."

The queen gazed at Boehmer with astonishment, and folded her arms. "Fortunately," she said, "I have something here with which to refresh your memory; for you are a very forgetful man, Monsieur Boehmer, not to say disagreeable," and she went straight to her desk, took from it a paper, which she opened and read over, and then slowly held it out to the unhappy Boehmer. "The style is sufficiently clear, I imagine," she said. And she sat down, the better to observe the jeweller while he read it. The face of the latter expressed at first complete incredulity, then by degrees the most terrible alarm.

"Well," said the queen, "you recognize that receipt, which attests in due form that you have taken back the necklace; and unless you have forgotten also that your name is Boehmer, —"

"But, Madame," cried Boehmer, trembling with

mingled rage and terror, "it is not I who signed this receipt."

The queen started back, almost annihilating this man with her flashing eyes. "You deny it?" she said.

"Absolutely! Even were I to leave here my liberty and my life, I would say that I never received the necklace; that I never signed that receipt. Were the block here, and the executioner by its side, I would still repeat, 'No, your Majesty, this receipt is not mine.'"

"Then, Monsieur," said the queen, turning pale, "I have robbed you? I, then, have your necklace?"

Boehmer searched his pocket-book, and drew from it a letter which he handed to the queen. "I do not think, Madame," he said in a tone respectful, but trembling with emotion,—"I do not think that if your Majesty had wished to return the necklace, you would have written this acknowledgment I now present to you."

"But," said the queen, "what is this scrap of paper? I never wrote that! Is that my hand-writing?"

"It is signed," said Boehmer, aghast.

"'Marie Antoinette de France'—you are mad! Am I of France,—I? Am I not Archduchess of Austria? Is it not absurd to say that I wrote that? Come, then, Monsieur Boehmer, the trap is too crude; go and tell your forgers so."

"My forgers—" stammered the jeweller, who came near fainting on hearing these words. "Your Majesty suspects me, Boehmer?"

"But you have suspected me, Marie Antoinette!" said the queen, haughtily.

"But this letter?" he objected, pointing to the paper which she still held.

"And that receipt?" she replied, pointing to the paper he had not given up.

Boehmer was obliged to lean upon a chair; the floor was whirling round beneath him. He breathed spasmodically, and the purple of apoplexy had replaced his livid paleness.

"Give me back my receipt," said the queen. "I hold it as good; and take back your letter signed 'Marie Antoinette de France.' The first lawyer you meet will tell you what it is worth;" and throwing down the note, after tearing from his hands the receipt, she turned her back and withdrew to a neighboring room, abandoning to himself the unhappy man, who was no longer able to form an idea, and who, in violation of all etiquette, allowed himself to sink into an easy-chair.

A few minutes, however, served to restore him; he rushed from the apartment, and went to join Bossange, to whom he related his adventure in such a manner as to excite his partner's suspicions with regard to himself. But he repeated his story so many times, and so clearly, that Bossange began to tear his wig, while Boehmer tore his hair, — a spectacle which, to the passers-by who happened to get a glimpse into the carriage, was painful and comical at the same time.

As it is not possible, however, to pass a whole day in a carriage; and as after having torn hair and wig one comes to the cranium; and as under the cranium there are or should be ideas, — the two jewellers conceived that of forcing, if possible, the queen's door, to obtain some sort of an explanation. They were making their way, therefore, toward the palace in a pitiable state, when they were met by one of the queen's officers, who requested that one of them should go to her Majesty. Their joy and their eagerness to obey may be readily imagined. They were admitted without delay.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CARDINAL IS SURPRISED.

THE queen seemed to be waiting impatiently ; and as soon as she saw the jewellers she exclaimed, eagerly, " Ah, there is Monsieur Bossange ; you have reinforced yourself, Boehmer. So much the better."

Boehmer had nothing to say ; he was meditating. The best thing a man can do in such a case is to express himself by gesture ; Boehmer threw himself at Marie Antoinette's feet. It was an expressive gesture which Bossange, as he was his partner, felt obliged to imitate.

" Gentlemen," said the queen, " I am calm at present, and I will not again become angry. Besides, an idea has presented itself to me which modifies my feelings with regard to you. Doubtless, we are all misled by some little mystery, which is no longer a mystery to me."

" Ah, Madame," cried Boehmer, delighted with these words of the queen, " you suspect me, then, no longer of having committed — oh, what an ugly word to speak — forgery !"

" I beg you to believe that it is as hard for me to hear, as for you to pronounce," said the queen. " No ; I do not suspect you longer."

" Does your Majesty, then, suspect any one ?"

" Answer my questions. You say that you are no longer in possession of the diamonds ?"

" We have them no longer," answered both jewellers together.

"It is of little importance to you to know by whom I returned them, — that is my affair. Have you not seen Madame la Comtesse de La Motte?"

"Your pardon, Madame, we have seen her —"

"And she gave you nothing — from me?"

"No, Madame. Madame la Comtesse only said, 'Wait!'"

"But that letter which professes to be written by me, — who sent it?"

"That letter," replied Boehmer, — "that, which your Majesty had in your hand, was brought to us by an unknown messenger during the night;" and he showed the false letter.

"Ah, ah!" said the queen, "you see, then, that it did not come directly from me." She rang, and a footman appeared.

"Let Madame la Comtesse de La Motte be sent for," said the queen, quietly. "And," she continued, in the same calm manner, "you have seen no one; you have not seen Monsieur de Rohan?"

"Yes, Madame. Monsieur de Rohan came to pay us a visit and inquire —"

"Very well," replied the queen, "we will seek no farther. If the Cardinal de Rohan is still connected with this affair, you would be wrong in giving yourself up to despair. Let me see: Madame de La Motte, in saying that word, 'Wait,' may have wished — No, I understand nothing about it. But go to Monsieur le Cardinal, and relate to him what you have just told me; lose no time, and say to him that I know everything."

The jewellers, revived by this little ray of hope, looked at each other with somewhat less alarm expressed in their faces. Bossange alone, who wanted to put in a word, ventured to say in a low voice, "Nevertheless, the queen

has in her hand a forged receipt, and forgery is a crime."

Marie Antoinette knitted her brows. "It is true," she said, "that if you have not received the necklace, this writing is a forgery. But in order to prove the forgery it is indispensable that I should confront you with the person to whom I intrusted the diamonds."

"Whenever your Majesty may wish," cried Bossange. "We do not fear the light; we are honest tradesmen."

"Then, go seek the light from Monsieur le Cardinal; he alone can clear up this affair."

"And will your Majesty permit us to bring you his reply?" asked Boehmer.

"I shall obtain information before you do," said the queen; "I shall be the one to free you from embarrassment in this matter. Go." She dismissed them, and when they had gone, yielding to her anxiety, she sent courier after courier to Madame de La Motte.

The cardinal was at home reading with a rage impossible to describe a short letter which Madame de La Motte had just sent him, as she pretended, from the queen. The letter was severe; it deprived the cardinal of all hope. It commanded him to think no more of what had taken place, and forbade him to appear familiarly at Versailles; it appealed to his loyalty not to attempt to renew relations that *had become impossible*.

In reading these words a second time, the prince jumped up with rage. He spelled out the letters one by one; he seemed to call the paper to account for the cruelties with which an unkind hand had burdened it. "Coquette, capricious, perfidious woman!" he cried out in his despair; "oh, I will have my revenge." He then tried to think of all the foolish prettexts which solace weak hearts in the sorrows of love, but which do not cure the love

itself. "Here are four letters," he said, "which she has written me, — all most unjust, one just as tyrannical as another. She received me, then, only through caprice! It is a humiliation I would hardly pardon, even if she did not sacrifice me to a new caprice." And the unhappy man read again with the fervor of hope all these letters, so pitiless in the rigor of their morality.

The last was a master-piece of cruelty; the poor cardinal's heart was pierced through and through by it; nevertheless he loved to such a degree that from a mere spirit of contradiction, he delighted in reading over and over again those harsh words sent from Versailles, according to Madame de La Motte.

It was at this moment that the jewellers presented themselves at the cardinal's hôtel. He was very much surprised at their persistence in asking to be admitted; three times he drove away his valet, who returned a fourth time to the charge, saying that Boehmer and Bossange had announced their determination to remain unless they were cast out by force.

"What does that mean?" said the cardinal. "Allow them to come in."

They entered; their agitated faces bore witness to the fierce struggle, moral and physical, through which they had passed. If they had been conquerors in one of these struggles, the unfortunate men had been vanquished in the other. Never had more distracted brains been summoned to perform their functions in the presence of a prince of the Church.

"In the first place," cried the cardinal, "what is the meaning of this outrage, gentlemen? Do we owe you anything?"

This tone chilled with terror the two partners.

"Are we to have a repetition of the scenes at Ver-

sailles?" said Boehmer, glancing at his partner out of the corner of his eye.

"Oh, no, no," replied the latter, adjusting his wig with a very warlike movement. "As for me, I am prepared for all kinds of assaults," and he took a step forward in an almost threatening attitude, while Boehmer, more prudent, remained behind.

The cardinal believed them mad, and told them so plainly.

"Monseigneur," said the desperate Boehmer, cutting short each syllable with a sigh, "give us justice, mercy! Spare this rage, and do not force us to fail in respect to the greatest, most illustrious of princes."

"Gentlemen, either you are not mad and will be thrown out of the windows," said the cardinal, "or you are mad and will be simply put out of the door. Take your choice."

"Monseigneur, we are not mad; we have been robbed!"

"What is that to me?" replied Monsieur de Rohan; "I am not lieutenant of police."

"But you have had the necklace in your possession, Monseigneur," said Boehmer, sobbing; "you will have to go before a magistrate, Monseigneur; you will go —"

"I have had the necklace?" said the prince. "It is the necklace, then, which has been stolen?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Well, what does the queen say?" cried the cardinal, beginning to take an interest.

"The queen has sent us to you, Monseigneur."

"It is very kind in her Majesty. But what can I do about it, my poor men?"

"You can do everything, Monseigneur; you can tell us what has become of it."

"I?"

"Doubtless."

"My dear Monsieur Boehmer, you might address me in such language, if I belonged to a band of robbers who had taken the queen's necklace."

"It is not the queen from whom the necklace was taken."

"From whom, then, good God?"

"The queen denies having had it in her possession."

"What! she denies it!" said the cardinal, with hesitation; "have you not a receipt from her?"

"The queen says that the receipt is a forgery."

"Come," cried the cardinal, "you are losing your senses, gentlemen."

"Is it not true?" said Boehmer to Bossange, who replied by three nods of assent.

"The queen has denied it," said the cardinal, "because there was some one with her when you spoke to her."

"No one, Monseigneur; but that is not all."

"What else, then?"

"Not only has the queen denied it, not only has she maintained that the acknowledgment is a forgery; but she has shown us a receipt proving that we have taken back the necklace."

"A receipt from you!" said the cardinal. "And this receipt?"

"Is a forgery like the other, Monsieur le Cardinal, as you know very well."

"A forgery. Two forgeries. And you say that I know it?"

"Assuredly, since you came to us to confirm what Madame de La Motte had told us; for you yourself knew very well that we had sold the necklace, and that it was in the hands of the queen."

"Let us see," said the cardinal, passing his hand over

his brow, "these are very grave matters, it seems to me. Let us understand each other. First, my operations with you."

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"In the first place, a purchase on her Majesty's account of a necklace upon which I paid you two hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"That is true, Monseigneur."

"Then a sale to the queen, — you told me, — on terms fixed by herself over her signature."

"Over her signature."

"Show it to me."

The jewellers drew the letter from the portfolio and handed it to the cardinal.

"Eh! what!" he cried, on glancing at it; "you are children! 'Marie Antoinette de France'! Is not the queen a daughter of the house of Austria? You have been robbed! The writing and the signature are false."

"But then," cried the jewellers, exasperated, "Madame de La Motte must know the thief and the forger."

The truth of that assertion was obvious to the cardinal. "Let us send for Madame de La Motte," said he, with anxiety.

Servants were sent in pursuit of Jeanne, whose carriage could not yet be far off. Meantime the jewellers waited in a corner of the room, exclaiming from time to time, "The necklace, — where is the necklace?"

"You will make me deaf," said the cardinal, losing patience. "Do I know where your necklace is? I delivered it myself to the queen, and that is all I know about it."

"The necklace, or the money!" repeated the two tradesmen.

"Gentlemen, it is no affair of mine," said the cardinal,

angrily, and much inclined to have the two jewellers turned out of the house.

"Madame de la Motte! Madame la Comtesse!" they cried; "it is she who has ruined us."

"Madame de La Motte is a person of unimpeachable integrity. You will suspect her at your peril."

"Some one must be guilty," said Boehmer, dolefully.

"These two forgeries have been committed by some one."

"By me?" asked Monsieur de Rohan, haughtily.

"Of course, Monseigneur, we would not say that."

"Well, then?"

"In short, Monseigneur, in Heaven's name give us some explanation."

"Wait till I have one myself."

"But, Monseigneur, what are we to answer to the queen? She too cries out against us."

"What does she say?"

"She says it is either you, or Madame de La Motte, who has the necklace."

"Well," said the cardinal, pale with shame and anger, "go and tell the queen — No, tell her nothing. Enough of scandal. But to-morrow I am to officiate in the chapel at Versailles. You may there see me approach the queen and ask her if she has not the necklace in her possession, and you may hear her answer. If then she should deny having it, — then, gentlemen, I am Rohan, I will pay."

On saying these words, with an indescribable loftiness of tone, the prince dismissed the partners, who, close together, backed out of the room.

"Till to-morrow, then," stammered Boehmer, "is it not, Monseigneur?"

"Till to-morrow, at eleven o'clock in the morning, at the chapel of Versailles," replied the cardinal.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FENCING AND DIPLOMACY.

ON the following morning, at about ten o'clock, a carriage bearing the arms of Monsieur de Breteuil entered the courtyard at Versailles.

Those readers of this book who recall the history of Balsamo and of Gilbert will remember that Monsieur de Breteuil, the rival and personal enemy of Monsieur de Rohan, had long been watching for an opportunity to give his enemy a mortal blow.

Diplomacy has this advantage over fencing, that it may wait fifteen years, or longer, planning where to strike and how to make its blow effective.

Monsieur had previously sent to request an audience, and found his Majesty dressing to go to Mass.

"Magnificent weather!" said Louis XVI., gayly, on the entrance of his visitor. "See, there is not a cloud in the sky."

"I am much grieved, Sire, to bring with me a cloud to your tranquillity," replied the minister.

"Come, then," cried the king, losing his lively manner, "the day begins badly. What is the matter?"

"I am much embarrassed, Sire, in speaking to you of the matter; and the more so because it does not pertain to the duties of my office, but rather to those of the lieutenant of police. It is about a robbery."

"A robbery!" cried the king; "you are keeper of the

seals, and thieves come within the functions of your office. What is it?"

"Well, Sire, the affair is this. Your Majesty has heard of the diamond necklace?"

"Monsieur Boehmer's?"

"Yes, Sire."

"The one which the queen refused?"

"Precisely."

"A refusal through which I obtained a splendid man-of-war, the 'Suffren,'" said the king, rubbing his hands.

"Well, Sire," said the Baron de Breteuil, "that necklace has been stolen."

"Ah, that is bad," said the king. "It was very valuable. But the diamonds can be recognized. To have them cut again would reduce the profit of the theft. They will be left as they are, and the police will find them."

"Sire," interrupted the baron, "this is no common theft. There are certain rumors associated with it."

"Rumors! What do you mean?"

"Sire, it is asserted that the queen has kept the necklace."

"How could she have kept it? In my very presence she refused it, and was unwilling even to look at it. Nonsense, Baron, the queen has not kept the necklace."

"Sire, I have not used the right word. Calumny is always so blind toward sovereigns that it has used a more offensive term. The word 'kept' —"

"Why, Monsieur de Breteuil," said the king, smiling, "I suppose no one imagines that the queen has stolen the necklace?"

"Sire," replied the minister, eagerly, "it is said that the queen renewed in secret the bargain refused in your

presence. It is said that the jewellers have a receipt, signed by her Majesty, which shows that the necklace is in her possession."

The king turned pale. "They say that?" he exclaimed. "What, then, will they not say? But it astonishes me, after all. If the queen bought the necklace secretly I should by no means blame her. The queen is a woman, and the necklace is a rare ornament of marvellous beauty. Thank God, the queen can spend a million and a half on her toilet if she is so inclined. I shall approve it; she has been wrong in one respect only, — in concealing from me her wishes. But it is not for the king to deal with that, it concerns the husband. I recognize no right on the part of any one to interfere, even with an ill-natured remark."

The baron bowed before these words of the king, so noble and so strong. But the king had only the appearance of firmness. A moment later he became restless and uneasy. "But," said he, "you spoke of robbery. If there had been a robbery the necklace would not be in the queen's possession. Let us be logical."

"Your Majesty has chilled me by your anger," said the baron; "I cannot continue."

"Oh, my anger! I, angry! As to that, Baron —" and the good king broke out into hearty laughter. "Come, go on, and tell me everything. Tell me even that the queen has sold the necklace to the Jews. Poor woman, she often needs money, and I do not always give it to her."

"I was about to speak of that to your Majesty. The queen, two months ago, asked through Monsieur de Calonne for five hundred thousand francs, and your Majesty refused to sign."

"That is true."

"Well, Sire, that money, it is said, was to serve for the

first payment on account of the necklace. The queen, not having the money, refused to pay."

"Well?" said the king, becoming gradually more interested.

"Well, Sire, here begins the story which my zeal obliges me to relate to your Majesty."

"What! you say your story begins here. Good God! what have you then to tell?"

"Sire, it is said that the queen had recourse to a certain person to obtain money."

"To whom? To a Jew, was it not?"

"No, Sire, not to a Jew."

"My God! you say that with a singular expression, Breteuil. Come, then, I know what it is, — some foreign intrigue. The queen has asked for money from her brother — her family. Austria is at the bottom of this."

"Far better if it were so," replied Monsieur de Breteuil.

"What! Far better? Of whom, then, did the queen ask money?"

"Sire, I dare not —"

"You surprise me, Monsieur," said the king, raising his head and assuming the royal tone. "Speak out immediately, if you please, and give me the name of this money-lender."

"Monsieur de Rohan, Sire."

"Indeed! Are you not ashamed to speak to me of Monsieur de Rohan, the most ruined man in the kingdom?"

"Sire —" said Monsieur de Breteuil, lowering his eyes.

"Your manner displeases me. Explain yourself at once."

"No, Sire; nothing in the world can compel me to

utter a word derogatory to the honor of my king and that of my queen."

The king frowned. "We are descending very low, Monsieur de Breteuil," said he. "This police report is impregnated with the odors of the place from which it comes."

"All calumny, Sire, exhales a deadly miasma; and for that reason kings purify them by heroic remedies, unless they are willing to see those poisons destroy their honor and their throne."

"Monsieur de Rohan!" murmured the king. "Why, what likelihood — Does the cardinal allow it to be said —"

"It will be proved to your Majesty that Monsieur de Rohan had negotiations with the jewellers, that the sale was arranged by him, and that with him were fixed the terms of payment."

"Is that really true?" cried the king, disturbed by jealousy and anger.

"It is a fact that must come out on the most superficial examination. I pledge myself to its truth."

"You say you pledge yourself to that?"

"Without reservation, — on my responsibility, Sire."

The king began walking up and down his cabinet. "These are terrible things," he said; "but in all this I fail to see that theft of which you spoke."

"Sire, the jewellers have a receipt, signed, they say, by the queen, and the queen should have the necklace."

"Ah," cried the king, with a sudden renewal of hope, "she denies it! — you see that she denies it, Breteuil."

"Eh, Sire, have I permitted your Majesty to think that I was not aware of the queen's innocence?"

"Then you accuse Monsieur de Rohan only —"

"But, Sire, the appearances indicate —"

"A grave accusation, Baron."

"Which perhaps will fail on an examination. But an examination is indispensable. Consider, Sire, that the queen affirms that she has not the necklace; that the jewellers maintain that they sold it to the queen; that the necklace is not to be found; and that the word 'thief' is uttered by the people in connection with the name of Monsieur de Rohan and with the sacred name of the queen."

"It is true; it is true;" said the king, in great anxiety; "you are right, Breteuil; the whole affair must be brought to light."

"Absolutely necessary, Sire."

"Who is passing below there? Do I not see Monsieur de Rohan on his way to the chapel?"

"Not yet, Sire; Monsieur de Rohan cannot yet be going to the chapel. It is not yet eleven o'clock; your Majesty has still half an hour."

"What shall we do, then?—speak to him; summon him?"

"No, Sire; permit me to counsel your Majesty to make no noise over the matter before consulting the queen."

"Yes; she will tell me the truth."

"That is not for a moment to be doubted, Sire."

"Come, Baron, give me all the details of the matter in their order, without reserve."

"I have it all set forth in my portfolio, with the evidence."

"Let us to work then. Wait till I have the door closed. I was to give two audiences this morning, but shall put them off."

The king gave his orders, and resuming his seat threw a last look from the window. "This time," said he, "it is the cardinal. Look."

Breteuil drew near to the window, and from behind the curtain perceived Monsieur de Rohan, who, in the full dress of a cardinal and archbishop, was directing his steps toward the apartment appointed for his use on his official visits to Versailles.

"Here he is at last," said the king, rising.

"So much the better," said Monsieur de Breteuil, "the explanation will not be delayed." He then set himself to exposing the affair to the king with all the zeal of a man bent on the destruction of another. With an infernal art he had brought together everything that would injure the cardinal. The king saw proofs of Monsieur de Rohan's guilt accumulate, but was in despair at not seeing at the same time proofs of the queen's innocence. Thus he suffered for a quarter of an hour, when suddenly cries were heard in the neighboring corridor. The king listened. Breteuil discontinued his reading. An officer knocked at the door of the cabinet.

"What can it be?" asked the king, rendered nervous by the revelations of Monsieur de Breteuil.

An officer entered. "Sire," he said, "her Majesty the queen begs your Majesty to join her in her apartment."

"There is something new," said the king, turning pale.

"Possibly," replied Breteuil.

"I am going to the queen; wait for us here, Monsieur de Breteuil."

"Well, we are nearing the end," murmured the keeper of the seals.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GENTLEMAN, CARDINAL, AND QUEEN.

At the time when Monsieur de Breteuil had entered the king's cabinet, Monsieur de Charny, pale and agitated, had sent to request an audience of the queen.

The latter was dressing. Through her window which opened on the terrace she saw Charny insisting on admission. She gave orders that he should be admitted. She yielded to the demand of her heart, saying to herself, with a noble pride, that a love like his, pure and spiritual, had the right to enter, at any hour, even the palaces of queens.

Charny entered, tremblingly touched the queen's hand, and said with a stifled voice, "Ah, Madame, what a misfortune!"

"What, then, is the matter?" cried the queen, turning pale.

"Madame, do you know what I have just learned? Do you know what is said? Do you know of what the king has been informed, or will learn to-morrow?"

The queen shuddered, thinking of that night of chaste delights when perhaps a hostile or a jealous eye had seen her with Charny in the park. "Tell me all; I am strong," she said, putting her hand to her heart.

"It is said, Madame, that you have purchased a necklace of Boehmer and Bossange."

"I returned it," she replied eagerly.

"Listen. It is said that you pretended to return it; that you expected to be able to pay for it; that the king

prevented that by withholding his signature from a draft by Monsieur de Calonne ; that thereupon you had recourse to some one to obtain the money ; and that this person is — your lover."

"You !" cried the queen, with an impulse of sublime confidence. "You, Monsieur ? Well, let them say that who will. They cannot take so much pleasure in the word 'lover,' launched as an insult, as there is to us in the word 'friend,' sacred to us henceforth."

Charny for an instant did not reply. He was astonished at the strong and copious eloquence issuing from pure love, — the heart's perfume of every generous woman. But the pause made by him increased the queen's anxiety. She cried out, "Of what are you speaking, Monsieur de Charny ? Calumny has a strange language which I do not comprehend. Is it a language that you understand ?"

"Madame, please give me your attention ; the situation is serious. Yesterday I went with my uncle, Monsieur de Suffren, who had business with the jewellers, Boehmer and Bossange. They related to him a frightful story, invented by your Majesty's enemies. Madame, I am in despair. If you have bought the necklace, tell me so ; if you have not paid for it, tell me, — but do not suffer me to believe that Monsieur de Rohan paid for it in your stead."

"Monsieur de Rohan !" cried the queen.

"Yes, Monsieur de Rohan, — he who is regarded as the queen's lover ; he from whom the queen borrows money ; he whom an unhappy man called Charny saw in the park of Versailles smiling at the queen, kneeling to the queen, kissing the queen's hands ; he —"

"Monsieur," cried Marie Antoinette, "if you believe such things it is because you do not love me."

"Oh !" replied the young man, "the danger is urgent.

I have come to ask of you neither frankness nor daring; I come to beg you to render me a service."

"In the first place, what is the danger?"

"The danger, Madame? The cardinal answering for the queen, paying for the queen, ruins the queen. I do not speak of the suffering caused to Monsieur de Charny by this confidential relation with Monsieur de Roban. No. Of such sufferings one dies, but does not complain."

"You are mad!" said the queen, angrily.

"I am not mad, Madame; but you are unfortunate, — you are lost. I saw you in the park; I was not deceived, I tell you. To-day the horrible, the deadly truth breaks out; Monsieur de Rohan boasts perhaps —"

The queen seized Charny's arm. "Mad! mad!" she exclaimed, with indescribable grief. "In Heaven's name, after what I have told you do not believe me guilty. Oh, Monsieur de Charny, if you do not wish me to despair to-day and to be dead to-morrow, do not say that you suspect me; or rather, flee so far that you may not hear my fall at the moment of my death."

Olivier wrung his hands in an agony of grief. "Listen to me," he said, "if you wish me to render you effective service."

"A service from you!" cried the queen, — "from you, more cruel than my enemies! — a service from a man who despises me! Never, Monsieur, never!"

Olivier drew near the queen and took her hands in his. "You will see," he said, "that I am not a man who moans and weeps. The moments are precious; this evening it will be too late to do what remains to be done. Will you save me from despair by saving yourself from shame?"

"Monsieur!"

"Oh, I shall not be particular as to my words in the presence of death. If you do not listen to me, I tell you, this evening we shall both be dead, — you, from shame ; I, from having to see you die. Let us go straight for the enemy, Madame, as in our battles ! Let us face the danger ! Let us meet death ! Let us go together, — I as the obscure soldier in the ranks, but brave, as you shall see ; you with Majesty, with strength, in the thickest of the fight. If you succumb, — well, you will not be alone. Look on me as a brother, Madame. You are in need of money — to pay for this necklace ?"

"I ?"

"Do not deny it."

"I tell you —"

"Do not tell me you have not the necklace."

"I swear to you —"

"Do not swear, if you wish me to love you still."

"Olivier !"

"There is one way left to save your honor and my love. The necklace is worth sixteen hundred thousand francs, of which you have already paid two hundred and fifty thousand. Here is a million and a half ; take it."

"What is that for ?"

"Do not stop to consider ; take it and pay —"

"Your property sold ! your lands taken by me and paid away ! you despoil yourself for me ! You are a good and noble man, and I will no longer palter with a love like that. Olivier, I love you !"

"Accept this money."

"No ; but I love you !"

"Monsieur de Rohan, then, is to pay it ? Think of it, Madame, it is no longer generosity on your part ; it is an overwhelming cruelty. You accept from the cardinal —"

"Come now, Monsieur de Charny, I am the queen, and if I give my subjects either love or fortune, I accept neither from them."

"What then are you going to do?"

"It is you who shall tell me what to do. What do you say Monsieur de Rohan thinks?"

"He thinks that you are his mistress."

"You are cruel, Olivier."

"I speak as if face to face with death."

"What do you say the jewellers think?"

"That since the queen cannot pay, Monsieur de Rohan will pay for her."

"What do you say the public thinks on the subject of the necklace?"

"That you are in possession of it; that you have hidden it; that you will acknowledge it only when it shall have been paid for, either by the cardinal, through his love for you, or by the king through fear of scandal."

"Well, and you, Charny, in your turn, — I look you in the face, and ask, What do you think of the scenes you saw in the park of Versailles?"

"I think, Madame, that you need to prove to me your innocence."

"The Prince Louis, Cardinal de Rohan, grand Almoner of France!" called the voice of an usher from the corridor.

"He!" murmured Charny.

"The proof you require," said the queen.

"You will receive him?"

"I was about to send for him."

"But I —"

"Go into my boudoir and leave the door ajar that you may hear all that is said."

"Madame!"

"Go quickly ; here comes the cardinal." She pushed Monsieur de Charny into the room which she had indicated, and ordered the cardinal to be admitted.

Monsieur de Rohan appeared on the threshold, resplendent in his official dress. At some distance behind him came a numerous following, whose costumes shone like their master's. Among these attendants were Boehmer and Bossange, somewhat embarrassed in their court dress.

The queen advanced to meet the cardinal, attempting a smile, which soon died out upon her lips. Louis de Rohan was grave, even sad. He had the calmness of the courageous man who is about to fight, the slightly threatening aspect of the priest who may have to pardon.

The queen pointed to a seat, but the cardinal remained standing. "Madame," he said, bowing, "I had many important things to communicate to your Majesty, who tries in every way to avoid my presence."

"I?" said the queen ; "why, so far from avoiding you, I was just about to send for you."

The cardinal cast a glance toward the boudoir. "Am I alone with your Majesty?" he said in a low voice ; "may I speak with perfect freedom?"

"With perfect freedom, Monsieur le Cardinal ; be unconstrained, we are alone," and she spoke distinctly, as if desirous of being heard by the gentleman hidden in the next room. She enjoyed with pride her courage, and the assurance which Monsieur de Charny would feel at the very first words.

The cardinal had resolved on his course of action. He drew the stool up to the chair of the queen so as to be as far as possible from the folding doors.

"You have a great many preambles," said the queen, affecting gayety.

"The fact is —" said the cardinal.

"The fact is?" repeated the queen.

"The king will not come in?" asked Monsieur de Rohan.

"Have no fear of the king or anybody else," replied Marie Antoinette, quickly.

"Oh, it is you whom I fear," said the cardinal, in an agitated voice.

"Then there is still less reason to be alarmed, for I am not very formidable. Speak with few words, in a loud and distinct voice; I like frankness, and if you are reserved I shall think that you are not a man of honor. Oh, no more gestures; I have been told that you had a grievance against me. Speak, — I am fond of war; I am of a race which knows no fear! You, also; I know that well. With what do you reproach me?"

The cardinal sighed, and rose from his seat as if to breathe more freely. Finally, having mastered his emotion, he began to speak.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

EXPLANATIONS.

"**MADAME**," said the cardinal, bowing, "you know what is said of our necklace?"

"No, **Monsieur**; I do not know, and I shall be happy to learn it from you."

"Why has your Majesty compelled me for so long a time to communicate with you only through a third person? Why, if you have any reason for hating me, do you not explain to me what it is?"

"I do not know what you mean, **Monsieur le Cardinal**, and I have no reason for hating you; but that, I believe, is not the object of our interview. Please to give me some positive information about this miserable necklace; and in the first place, where is **Madame de La Motte**?"

"I was about to ask that of your Majesty."

"Thinking, but if any one can tell where **Madame de La Motte** is, you are the one, I think."

"I, **Madame**, repeat what you say!"

"Oh, I am not here to receive your condolences. **Monsieur le Cardinal**, I had come to speak to **Madame de La Motte**. I saw the dog, and she has been enough for me for some time; but she has not yet to reply. You will acknowledge that this disappearance is strange."

"And", **Madame**, are she surrounded in her disappearance by the same as **Madame de La Motte**, requesting her to

come to see me, and she has treated my request as she did that of your Majesty."

"Then let us leave the countess and speak of ourselves."

"Oh, no, Madame, let us speak of her; for certain words of your Majesty have excited in me a painful suspicion. It seems to me that your Majesty reproached me with being too attentive to the countess."

"I have as yet reproached you with nothing at all, Monsieur."

"Oh, Madame, the fact is that such a suspicion would explain to me all the susceptibilities of your soul, and then I should understand, even in my despair, the severity, otherwise inexplicable, with which you have treated me."

"I no longer understand what you are saying," said the queen. "You are impenetrably obscure; it is not to make the affair more intricate that I ask you for explanations. To the point! to the point!"

"Madame," cried the cardinal, clasping his hands and drawing nearer the queen, "do me the favor not to change the conversation. Two words more on the subject which we were considering just now, and we should understand each other."

"Really, Monsieur, you speak a language which I do not know; let us return to French, I beg. Where is that necklace which I returned to the jewellers?"

"The necklace you returned!" cried Monsieur de Rohan.

"Yes; what have you done with it?"

"I know nothing about it, Madame."

"Well, there is one thing perfectly clear. Madame de La Motte took the necklace, and returned it in my name; the jewellers pretend that they have not received it. I

have in my possession a receipt which proves the contrary; the jewellers say that the receipt is a forgery. Madame de La Motte could in one word explain everything; she cannot be found. Well, let us put suppositions in the place of hidden fact. Madame de La Motte wished to return the necklace. You, whose kindly desire it was that I should buy this necklace; you, who brought it to me and offered to pay for it, — an offer — ”

“Which your Majesty very unkindly refused to accept,” said the cardinal, with a sigh.

“Well, yes; you have persevered in this fixed idea that I should have the necklace, and therefore you did not return it to the jewellers, hoping still that I might be prevailed upon to take it. Madame de La Motte has shown weakness in this matter, — she who knew how impossible it was for me to pay for it, and my unchangeable resolution not to have it, since I had no money. Madame de La Motte, through zeal for me, has conspired with you; and now she fears my anger and will not present herself. Am I right? Tell me that I am. Allow me to reproach you with this inconsiderateness, this disobedience of my formal orders. You shall be absolved by a reprimand, and that will be an end of it. I will do more; I will promise you to pardon Madame de La Motte, so that she may be relieved of her penance. But for mercy's sake, Monsieur, let us have light, light! I do not wish at this moment that a shadow should be cast upon my life; I will not have it, — do you hear?”

The queen had uttered these words so vigorously that the cardinal had neither dared nor been able to interrupt her; but as soon as she had ceased speaking, “Madame,” he said, stifling a sigh, “I will reply to all your suppositions. No; I did not persevere in the idea that you ought to possess the necklace, since I was sure that you pos-

sessed it already. No; I did not conspire with Madame de La Motte in connection with this necklace. No; it is no more in my possession than in that of the jewellers, or in your own."

"It is not possible!" cried the queen, in amazement. "You, then, have not the necklace?"

"No, Madame."

"You have not advised Madame de La Motte to stay away on account of all this?"

"No, Madame."

"You have not concealed her?"

"No, Madame."

"You do not know what has become of her?"

"No more than you, Madame."

"But then how do you explain all that has happened?"

"Madame, I am forced to confess that I cannot explain it. Moreover, it is not the first time that I have had to complain to the queen of not being understood by her."

"And when was that, Monsieur. I do not recall it."

"Be so kind, Madame," said the cardinal, "as to re-read in imagination my letters."

"Your letters!" said the queen, in surprise. "You wrote to me?"

"Too seldom, Madame, to say all that was in my heart."

The queen rose. "It seems to me," she said, "that we have both been deceived; let us end this little farce. What were you saying about letters? What letters, and what have you upon your heart, or in your heart? I don't remember just what you said."

"My God! Madame, perhaps I have uttered too loud the secret of my soul."

"What secret? Are you in your right mind, Monsieur le Cardinal?"

"Madame ! "

"Oh, do not prevaricate ! You speak like a man who wishes to lay a snare for me, or who wishes to embarrass me, before witnesses."

"I swear to you, Madame, that I have said nothing — Is there really any one listening ? "

"No, Monsieur, a thousand times no ! there is no one ; so explain yourself fully, and if you are in full possession of your reason, prove it."

"Oh, Madame, why is Madame de La Motte not here ? She would help me — she who is our friend — to awaken, if not the attachment, at least the memory, of your Majesty."

"*Our* friend ; my attachment ; my memory ? I am falling from the clouds."

"Ah, Madame, I entreat you," said the cardinal, stung by the sharp tone of the queen, "spare me ! You are at liberty to love no longer ; but do not insult me."

"Ah, my God ! " cried the queen, turning pale, "what is this man saying ? "

"Very well," continued Monsieur de Rohan, boiling with rage, — "very well, Madame, I think I have been sufficiently discreet and reserved not to be so harshly treated ; besides, I reproach you only with trivial grievances. I am wrong to repeat them. I should have known that when a queen has said, 'I am no longer willing,' it is a law as imperious as when a woman says, 'I am willing ! ' "

The queen uttered a wild cry, and seized the cardinal by his lace sleeve. "Tell me quickly, Monsieur," said she, in a trembling voice ; "I said, 'I am no longer willing,' and I said, 'I am willing' ? To whom did I say the one ; to whom did I say the other ? "

"Why, you said both to me."

"To you?"

"Forget that you said the one, I shall not forget that you said the other."

"You are a wretch, Monsieur de Rohan! You are a liar!"

"I?"

"You are a coward; you calumniate a woman."

"I?"

"You are a traitor; you insult the queen."

"And you, — you are a woman without heart, a queen without faith."

"Wretch!"

"You have led me by degrees to a mad love for you. You have filled me with hopes."

"Hopes! My God! am I mad? Is he a villain?"

"Would I have dared otherwise to ask audiences at night, which you granted me?"

The queen uttered a cry of rage which was answered by a sigh from the boudoir.

"Would I have dared to come alone into the park of Versailles if you had not sent Madame de La Motte to me?"

"My God!"

"Would I have dared to steal the key which opens that gate near the huntsman's lodge?"

"My God!"

"Would I have dared to ask you to bring the rose which I have here? Adored rose! accursed rose! dried, burned up by my ardent kisses!"

"My God!"

"Would I have compelled you to return the next night and give me both your hands, whose sweetness consumes continually my brain and makes me mad. You are right to call me mad."

"Oh, enough! enough!"

"Finally, would I, in my most furious pride, ever have dared to dream of that third night with its clear sky, its sweet silence, its perfidious love?"

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" cried the queen, retreating from the cardinal, "you are blaspheming!"

"My God!" replied the cardinal, raising his eyes to heaven, "thou knowest that to keep the love of this woman, I would have given my wealth, my liberty, my life!"

"Monsieur de Rohan, if you wish to preserve all that, you will say right here that you are seeking to ruin me; that you have invented all these horrors; that you did not come to Versailles in the night——"

"I did come," replied the cardinal, nobly.

"You are a dead man if you maintain such language."

"A Rohan never lies. I did come."

"Monsieur de Rohan, Monsieur de Rohan, in the name of Heaven, tell me that you did not come into the park——"

"I would die, if necessary, as you threatened me just now; but I say that I saw you in the park of Versailles, whither Madame de La Motte conducted me."

"Once more," cried the queen, livid and trembling with emotion, "do you retract?"

"No."

"Still again, tell me that you have plotted against me this infamy?"

"No."

"For the last time, Monsieur de Rohan, acknowledge that you may have been deceived, that all this is a calumny, a dream, an impossibility, — I know not what; but confess that I am innocent, that I may be so——"

"No."

The queen drew herself up proudly and solemnly. "You will have, therefore, to deal with the justice of the king, since you defy the justice of God."

The cardinal bowed without speaking.

The queen rang so violently that several of her women entered at once. "Let his Majesty be informed," she said, "that I beg he will do me the honor to come to me."

An officer went to execute this order. The cardinal, determined to face everything boldly, remained in the corner of the room.

Marie Antoinette approached several times the door of the boudoir without entering, as if, having lost her reason, she had found it again on reaching that door.

Within a short time the king entered the room. As the door was thrown open, in the midst of the waiting throng could be seen the agitated faces of Boehmer and Bossange, who felt the storm in the air.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ARREST.

THE king had scarcely appeared at the door of the queen's cabinet when the queen addressed him vehemently. "Sire," she said, "here is Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan, who says incredible things ; please ask him to repeat them to you."

At these unexpected words the cardinal turned pale. In fact, the position was so strange that he could not comprehend it. Could he repeat to his king, — he the respectful subject, — could he declare to the husband — he the pretended lover — all the rights he thought he had acquired over the queen and the wife ?

But the king turned toward the cardinal, thus absorbed in his reflections, and said, "It is with regard to a certain necklace, Monsieur, that you have incredible things to say to me, and I incredible things to hear ? Speak, then ; I am listening."

Monsieur de Rohan immediately decided upon his course. Of the two difficulties he would choose the least ; of the two attacks, he would undergo that which was least dishonorable to the king and queen ; and if they should imprudently expose him to the second danger, well, he would meet it like a brave man.

"With regard to the necklace, yes, Sire," murmured his Eminence.

"Why, Monsieur," said the king, "you did then buy the necklace ?"

"Sire —"

"Yes, or no?"

The cardinal looked at the queen and did not answer.

"Yes or no?" she repeated. "The truth, Monsieur, the truth; nothing else is asked of you."

Monsieur de Rohan turned away his head, and did not reply.

"Since Monsieur de Rohan will not answer, answer yourself, Madame," said the king; "you must know something of all this. Did you, yes or no, purchase that necklace?"

"No!" said the queen, emphatically.

Monsieur de Rohan shuddered.

"This is the word of a queen!" cried the king, solemnly; "take heed to it, Monsieur le Cardinal."

A smile of scorn rose to Monsieur de Rohan's lips.

"You say nothing?" said the king.

"Of what am I accused, Sire?"

"The jewellers say that they sold a necklace either to you or the queen. They show a receipt from her Majesty."

"The receipt is a forgery," said the queen.

"The jewellers," continued the king, "say that in case the queen fails to pay, they are guaranteed by pledges made by you, Monsieur le Cardinal."

"I do not refuse to pay, Sire," said Monsieur de Rohan. "This must of course be the truth, since the queen allows it to be said," and he smiled more scornfully than before.

"Monsieur le Cardinal," replied the king, "there is nevertheless in this affair a forgery which has compromised the signature of the queen of France."

"There is another forgery," cried the queen, "of which it is not easy to accuse a nobleman, — that by which it is pretended that the jewellers took back the necklace."

"The queen is at liberty," said Monsieur de Rohan in the same tone, "to attribute to me both forgeries ; what matters it whether I committed one or two?"

"Be careful," said the king to the cardinal, "you render your position more serious, Monsieur. I tell you to justify yourself, and you have the appearance of accusing others."

The cardinal reflected a moment ; then as if succumbing under the weight of this mysterious calumny which would affect his honor, "Justify myself?" he said ; "impossible !"

"Monsieur, the jewellers say that a necklace has been stolen from them ; by offering to pay for it, you confess that you are guilty."

"Who will believe it?" said the cardinal, with superb disdain.

"Then, Monsieur, if you do not suppose that it will be believed, it shall be believed," and an angry look came over the usually placid face of the king.

"Sire, I know nothing of what is said," replied the cardinal. "I know nothing of what has been done ; I can only affirm that I have not had the necklace ; I can only say that the diamonds are in the possession of some one who ought to declare himself, but will not, and who obliges me to repeat to him that passage of Scripture, 'Let the punishment fall on the head of the guilty.'"

At these words the queen made a movement to take the arm of the king, who said to her, "The question is between you and him, Madame. For the last time I ask, have you this necklace?"

"No, by the honor of my mother, by the life of my son."

The king, full of joy at this declaration, turned toward the cardinal. "Then the affair is between you and jus-

tice, Monsieur," he said; "unless you should prefer to trust to my clemency."

"The clemency of kings is for the guilty, Sire," replied the cardinal; "I prefer the justice of men."

"You will acknowledge nothing, then?"

"I have nothing to say."

"But, Monsieur," cried the queen, "your silence compromises my honor!"

The cardinal was silent.

"Well, then, I will not be silent," continued the queen. "This reserve is terrible to me, and it pretends a generosity which I disclaim. You must know, Sire, that the crime of the cardinal does not wholly consist in the sale or robbery of the necklace."

Monsieur de Rohan raised his head, and turned pale.

"What is the meaning of this?" said the king, becoming uneasy.

"Madame!" murmured the cardinal, in alarm.

"Oh, no consideration, no fear, no weakness, shall prevent me from speaking; I have here in my heart motives which urge me to proclaim my innocence in the public place."

"Your innocence!" said the king. "Why, Madame, who would be bold enough, or cowardly enough, to force your Majesty to speak that word?"

"I entreat you, Madame," said the cardinal.

"Ah, you begin to tremble. I had guessed aright; your plots need the darkness! Give me the full light of day! Sire, ask Monsieur le Cardinal to tell you what he has just told me here, in this place."

"Madame! Madame!" said Monsieur de Rohan, "take care; you are passing all bounds!"

"What do you say?" said the king, haughtily. "Who speaks thus to the queen? It is not I, I suppose?"

"That is exactly the case, Sire," said Marie Antoinette. "Monsieur le Cardinal speaks thus to the queen because he pretends to have the right to do so."

"You, Monsieur!" murmured the king, becoming livid.

"He!" cried the queen, scornfully, — "he!"

"Monsieur le Cardinal has proofs?" said the king, taking a step toward the prince.

"Monsieur de Rohan has letters, so he says," said the queen.

"Let us see them, Monsieur!" insisted the king.

"Those letters!" cried the queen, angrily, — "those letters! Oh, that is not all," pursued the queen, who was growing more and more animated under the influence of the cardinal's generous silence, "Monsieur le Cardinal has obtained rendezvous."

"Madame, for pity's sake!" said the king.

"For modesty's sake!" said the cardinal.

"In short, Monsieur!" said the queen, "if you are not the basest of mankind, if you hold anything sacred in this world, — if you have proofs, produce them."

Monsieur de Rohan slowly raised his head and replied, "No, Madame, I have none."

"You will not add this crime to the others," continued the queen; "you will not cover me with disgrace. You have an accomplice, a witness in all this; name him, or name her."

"Who is it then?" cried the king.

"Madame de La Motte, Sire," said the queen.

"Ah," said the king, triumphant at seeing his suspicions justified; "well, let me see this woman, — let me question her."

"Ah, yes; but she has disappeared," said the queen. "Ask Monsieur what he has done with her."

"Others must have caused her disappearance," replied the cardinal, "who are more interested to keep her away than I can be. That is the reason why she can no longer be found."

"But, Monsieur, since you are innocent," said the queen, with rage, "help us to find the guilty ones."

But the Cardinal de Rohan, after having darted a last glance, turned his back and folded his arms.

"Monsieur," said the king, deeply offended, "you shall be taken to the Bastille."

The cardinal bowed, then, in a firm tone, said, "Thus attired in my pontifical robes; before the whole court? Consider, Sire, the scandal will be terrible, and will be most heavy for the head on which it shall fall."

"I wish it thus," said the king, very much agitated.

"It is an injustice to which you are prematurely subjecting a prelate, Sire; and torture before accusation is not legal."

"It must be so," replied the king, opening the door of the room to look for some one to whom to give his order.

Monsieur de Breteuil was there; his piercing eyes had divined in the excited appearance of the queen, in the agitation of the king, in the attitude of the cardinal, the ruin of an enemy. The king had hardly finished speaking to him in a low voice, when he cried out aloud, "Arrest Monsieur le Cardinal!"

Monsieur de Rohan trembled. The murmurs he heard throughout the gallery, the agitation of the courtiers, the sudden arrival of the body-guards, gave to this scene a character of ill-omen.

The cardinal passed before the queen without bowing, — an insult which made the blood of the proud princess boil. He bowed very humbly in passing before the king, and assumed when approaching Monsieur de

Breteuil an expression of pity so skilfully shaded that the baron must have thought himself insufficiently avenged.

A lieutenant of the guards approached timidly, and seemed to ask of the cardinal himself confirmation of the order he had just heard.

"Yes, Monsieur," said Monsieur de Rohan to him; "yes, it is I whom you are to arrest."

"You will conduct Monsieur to his apartment, while I decide during Mass what is to be done," said the king, in the midst of a death-like silence.

The king remained alone with the queen, the doors still open, while the cardinal slowly withdrew along the gallery, preceded by the lieutenant of the guards, hat in hand.

"Madame," said the king, "you know that this must lead to a public trial, — that is to say, a scandal beneath which will fall the honor of the guilty ones."

"I thank you!" cried the queen, pressing tenderly the hands of the king, "you have taken the only method of justifying me."

"You thank me?"

"With all my soul. You have acted as a king! I, as a queen! Be assured of it."

"It is well," replied the king, full of joy, "we shall at last get at the root of all this villany; and when the serpent shall have been once crushed beneath our feet, I hope we shall live in peace and happiness." He kissed the queen's brow and returned to his own apartments.

At the extremity of the gallery, Monsieur de Rohan had found Boehmer and Bossange half-fainting in each other's arms. Then, some paces farther on, the cardinal perceived his courier, who, frightened at this disaster, was watching for a look from his master.

"Monsieur," said the cardinal to the officer who conducted him, "can I send word home that I am arrested?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, if no one sees you."

The cardinal thanked him; then addressing his courier in German, he wrote a few words upon a page of his prayer-book which he tore off and let fall at the feet of his courier.

"I follow you," he said to the officer, and they disappeared together.

The courier pounced upon this paper like a vulture on his prey, rushed out of the palace, mounted his horse, and fled to Paris. The cardinal could see him galloping along the road, through one of the windows of the staircase as he was descending with his guide.

"She ruins me," he murmured; "I save her! It is for you, my king, that I do this; it is for you, my God, who commands the forgiveness of injuries, it is for you that I forgive others. Forgive me!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DOCUMENTS IN EVIDENCE.

THE king had scarcely got back to his room, and signed the order for the committal of Monsieur de Rohan to the Bastille, when Monsieur le Comte de Provence entered the cabinet, making signs to Monsieur de Breteuil which the latter could not comprehend. These signs, however, were not addressed to the keeper of seals, but were intended to attract the attention of the king, who every little while glanced into a looking-glass opposite which he was sitting while inditing his order. The count at last succeeded; the king perceived the signs, and dismissing Monsieur de Breteuil, "Why did you make those signs to Breteuil?" he said to his brother.

"Oh, Sire!"

"That vivacity of gesture, that preoccupied air means something."

"Doubtless, but —"

"You are at liberty to keep silent, brother," said the king, with an air of vexation.

"Sire, I have just learned of the arrest of Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan."

"Well, why should this news cause you such agitation? Is it because Monsieur de Rohan did not appear to you to be guilty? Have I done wrong to strike at even the powerful?"

"Wrong? by no means, brother. You have not been wrong; I did not mean to say that."

"It would have surprised me very much, Monsieur le Comte de Provence, if you had taken the part, against the queen, of a man who sought to dishonor her. I have just seen the queen, brother ; a word from her sufficed — "

"Oh, Sire, God forbid that I should accuse the queen ! Her Majesty — my sister — has no more devoted friend than I. How many times has it happened that I have defended her, on the contrary, and it may be said without reproach, even against yourself ? "

"Indeed, brother, has she been accused so often ? "

"I am unfortunate, Sire ; you attack me at every word. I would say that the queen herself would not believe me, if I appeared to doubt her innocence."

"Then you rejoice with me in the humiliation of the cardinal, in the prospect of the trial which will ensue, in the scandal which will terminate the calumnies which no one would utter against a simple woman of the court ? "

"Yes, Sire, I approve entirely the conduct of your Majesty ; and I say that all is as it should be with regard to the affair of the necklace."

"*Pardieu!* brother," said the king, "nothing could be more transparent. Has not Monsieur de Rohan been boasting of the familiar friendship of the queen, concluding in his own name a bargain for the diamonds she has refused, and allowing it to be said that these diamonds had been taken by the queen, or by some one for the queen ? It is monstrous ! It is as she said : 'What would people have believed if I had Monsieur de Rohan for an associate in this mysterious traffic ?' "

"Sire."

"And then, you do not know, brother, that calumny never stops half-way ; that the inconsiderateness of Monsieur de Rohan compromises the queen, but that the rehearsal of this inconsiderateness dishonors her."

"Oh, yes, brother; yes, I repeat it, you have been entirely right as far as the affair of the necklace is concerned."

"Well, what do you mean?" said the king, in surprise.
"Is there anything else?"

"But, Sire — the queen must have told you —"

"Told me — what?"

"Sire, you wish to embarrass me. It is impossible that the queen should not have told you —"

"Told me what, Monsieur? What is it?"

"Sire —"

"Ah, the pranks of Monsieur de Rohan, his concealments, his pretended correspondence?"

"No, Sire, no."

"What then can you mean? — the interviews the queen granted to Monsieur de Rohan on this business of the necklace —"

"No, Sire; it is not that."

"All that I know is this, — that I have absolute confidence in the queen, which she merits by her nobility of character. It would have been very easy for her Majesty not to have said a word of all this. By at once cutting short all this mystery, which was becoming a scandal, she has shown that she appealed to me before appealing to the public. She has selected me as her confessor, her judge; the queen has therefore told me all."

"Well, then," replied the Comte de Provence, "once more you are questioning my friendship and my respect for the queen, my sister. If you proceed against me with this susceptibility I shall be afraid to say anything lest I who am her advocate pass for an accuser or an enemy. And yet see how illogical you are. The queen's confessions have already led to the discovery of a truth which justifies my sister. Why should you not wish to see more,

so that the queen's innocence may be more clearly revealed?"

"To the point, advocate, to the point! What do you know more than the queen has told me?"

"Nothing, Sire, and everything. Let me know first just what the queen has told you."

"The queen has told me that she has not the necklace."

"Good!"

"She says that she did not sign the receipt given to the jewellers."

"Very good!"

"She says that the report of an arrangement with Monsieur de Rohan is false,—an invention of her enemies."

"Very good, Sire."

"She says that she has never given Monsieur de Rohan the right to think that he was more to her than one of her subjects,—a person indifferent to her, unknown."

"Ah!—she has said that?"

"And in a tone that admitted no answer; the cardinal did not venture to reply."

"Then, Sire, if the cardinal did not reply, he confessed himself a liar; and by this disavowal he aids the currency of other rumors of preferences accorded to certain persons by the queen."

"Eh, great God! is there more to come?" cried the king, in a tone of deep discouragement.

"Nothing but what is very absurd, as you will see. Since it is established that Monsieur de Rohan did not walk with the queen—"

"What!" cried the king, "is it pretended that Monsieur de Rohan has taken walks with the queen?"

"Which has been denied by the queen herself, Sire, and by the disavowal of Monsieur de Rohan. But, in short,

when that is settled inquiry arises, — malignity is so persistent, — how it came about that the queen should walk in the night in the park of Versailles."

"In the night! — in the park! — the queen!"

"And with whom she walked," continued the count, quietly.

"With whom?" murmured the king.

"Certainly. All eyes are fixed upon the queen, — especially observant of what she does at night."

"But, brother, what you say is infamous! Be careful!"

"Sire, I repeat it, — and with so much indignation that I am sure your Majesty will feel impelled to discover the truth."

"What, Monsieur! It is said that the queen walks with company, in the night, in the park of Versailles?"

"Not with company, Sire, — in private. Oh, if rumor had said 'with company,' it would have been of no consequence."

The king broke forth angrily, "You will prove to me, Monsieur, what you have said."

"Oh, easily, very easily. There are four certificates. The first is by my captain of the hunt, who saw the queen, two nights in succession, leaving the park by the gate near the huntsman's lodge. Here it is; read it."

The king took the paper with trembling hands, read it, and returned it to his brother.

"Here is one, Sire, that is more interesting. It is that of the night-guard at Trianon. He declares that in the parks all was quiet, except on the night when her Majesty the queen was taking a walk, leaning on a gentleman's arm. See, the report is explicit."

The king read, shuddered, and dropped his arms by his sides.

"The third," continued the count, quietly, "is that of

the guard at the eastern gate. This man saw and recognized the queen as she was leaving the park. Look, Sire: he says that from the distance he was unable to recognize *the gentleman from whom her Majesty was parting*, but from his general appearance thought him to be an officer. He adds, curiously enough, that the presence of her Majesty could not be doubted, because she was accompanied by the queen's friend, Madame de La Motte."

"The queen's friend!" cried the king, furiously. "Yes, it is so written, — 'the queen's friend.'"

"The last," continued the count, "seems to be more definite than all the others. It is that of the master of the locks, charged with seeing that all the gates are locked at night. He certifies that he saw the queen going into Apollo's Baths with a gentleman."

The king snatched the paper from the hands of the count, and read it.

Meanwhile the Comte de Provence continued, "It is true that Madame de La Motte remained outside, at a distance of twenty paces, and that the queen remained only about an hour in that pavilion."

"But the name of the gentleman?" cried the king.

"Sire, he is not named in this report; but if your Majesty will glance at one other certificate — It is that of a gamekeeper who was watching for game near Apollo's Baths."

"Dated on the following day," said the king.

"Yes, Sire. He saw the queen go out of the park by the little gate, and look around her. She was leaning on the arm of Monsieur de Charny."

"Monsieur de Charny!" cried the king, beside himself with rage and shame. "Well, well — Wait for me here, Count; I am going at last to get at the truth of this matter," and he rushed out of his cabinet.

CHAPTER XL.

A LAST ACCUSATION.

WHEN the king left the queen's room she ran to the boudoir, where Monsieur de Charny had heard everything. She pushed open the door, and then having closed that into the corridor, she fell exhausted into an arm-chair, and silently awaited the judgment of Monsieur de Charny. The count came out from the boudoir, pale and melancholy.

"Well?" said the queen.

"Madame," he replied, "you see that everything is opposed to our friendship. If my own conviction should not wound you, still there is public opinion. After the scandal that has now burst forth, there can be no peace for you, no rest for me."

"Then," said the queen, with much emotion, "all that I have just done, — this commotion, this perilous attack on one of the highest noblemen in the kingdom, my open hostility to the Church, my good name exposed to parliamentary discussion, — all this does not satisfy you? I say nothing of the confidence of the king, destroyed forever. What is the king? — only a husband;" and she smiled, with so bitter sadness that tears gushed from her eyes.

"Oh," cried Charny, "you are the most noble, the most generous of women! If I do not reply at once as my heart urges me, it is because I feel my inferiority, and

dare not profane that sublime heart by asking for a place in it."

"Monsieur de Charny, you think me guilty?"

"Madame!"

"Monsieur de Charny, you have believed the words of the cardinal?"

"Madame!"

"Monsieur de Charny, I demand that you tell me what impression the attitude of Monsieur de Rohan has left on your mind."

"I must say, Madame, that Monsieur de Rohan has not acted like the madman you said he was, nor like a weak man, as some might have thought him. He is acting on sincere convictions. He loves you, and at this moment is the victim of an error which must lead him to ruin, and you —"

"Me?"

"You, Madame, to inevitable dishonor."

"My God!"

"Before me rises a threatening spectre, — that odious woman, Madame de La Motte, who has disappeared when her evidence might restore to us tranquillity, honor, security. That woman is your evil genius, the scourge of royalty; that woman, whom you have imprudently admitted to a knowledge of your secrets, alas! perhaps of your intimacy —"

"My secrets! my intimacy! Ah, Monsieur, I beg of you —"

"Madame, the cardinal affirmed very clearly — and proved it — that you had arranged with him the purchase of the necklace."

"Ah, you come back to that, Monsieur de Charny!" said the queen, blushing.

"Pardon, pardon! You see that my heart is less gen-

erous than yours, — that I am unworthy to share your thoughts. I seek to assuage, and I only irritate.”

“Monsieur,” said the queen, assuming a haughty and angry manner, “what the king believes, all the world may believe. I shall not be more accommodating to my friends than to my husband. It seems to me that a man can no longer wish to see a woman when he has lost his respect for her. I am not speaking of you, Monsieur,” she said, checking herself suddenly. “I am not a woman, I am a queen ; you are not a man, but, for me, a subject.”

Charny bowed so low that the queen had reason to think the humility of this *subject* quite sufficient.

“I advised you,” she said suddenly, “to remain on your estates. That would have been more prudent. Remote from the life of the court, which is made so uncongenial to you by your habits, your rectitude, and — allow me to say — your inexperience, you might have judged more correctly those who play their part upon that stage. In order to preserve the optical illusion, Monsieur de Charny, we ought to keep on our rouge and our high heels in presence of the multitude. Too ready to condescend, I have neglected, as a queen, to maintain toward those who loved me the dazzling pomp of royalty. Ah, Monsieur de Charny, the crown on the head of a queen enables her to dispense with chastity, gentleness, intelligence, and especially affection. She is a queen, Monsieur ; she rules, — to what purpose should she be beloved ?”

“I cannot tell you, Madame,” replied Charny, with agitation, “how much I am distressed by your Majesty’s severity. I had forgotten that you were my queen ; but — render me that justice — I have never forgotten that, above all other women, you are entitled to my respect and my — ”

“Do not finish ; I am not soliciting. Yes ; as I said,

absence is necessary to you. Something tells me that your name will at length be involved in this matter."

"Madame, it is impossible!"

"You say, 'impossible.' Think then of the power of those who, for the last six months, have been playing with my reputation, — with my life. Have not you said that the cardinal is acting from sincere *conviction*, in consequence of an *error* into which he has fallen? Those who cause such *convictions*, Monsieur le Comte, — those who create such *errors* will be able to prove that you are disloyal to the king and a disgraceful friend to me. Those who can invent so readily what is false, will they not discover what is true? Lose no time then; the danger is serious. Withdraw to your estates; avoid the impending scandal. I do not wish that my fate should drag you down, and that your career should be destroyed. I who, thank God! am endowed with the strength of innocence; I who have no stain upon my life; I who am resolved to open my breast to my enemies that they may see the purity of my heart, — I shall resist. For you there will be ruin, disgrace, perhaps the prison. Take back your money, so nobly offered, and receive the assurance that not one of the generous impulses of your soul has escaped my knowledge, that your doubts have not wounded me, and that I have sympathized with your sufferings. Depart, I say, and seek elsewhere what the queen of France cannot give you, — faith, hope, happiness. Before the matter can come to trial before parliament, fifteen days must elapse. Go, then! Your uncle has two vessels ready, at Cherbourg and at Nantes; make your choice. But at all events, go away from me. I am the bearer of misfortune; avoid me. I valued but one thing in the world; that fails me, and I am lost."

On saying these words the queen rose abruptly, and

seemed to indicate the termination of the interview. Charny approached her respectfully, but eagerly. "Your Majesty," he said in an agitated voice, "has shown to me my duty. It is not on my estates, it is not outside of France, that the danger lies, but at Versailles, where you are suspected; at Paris, where you are to be judged. You cannot have a more loyal witness, a more resolute support, than I; I shall remain. Those who know so many things will say them; but at least we shall have the happiness — dear to courageous hearts — of meeting our enemies face to face. Let them tremble before the majesty of an innocent queen, and the courage of a man superior to them all. Yes; I shall remain, Madame, and be assured your Majesty need no longer hide your thoughts from me. Every one knows that I do not run away from danger. You know that I have no fear; you know too that in order to avoid me it is not necessary to send me into exile. Oh, Madame, hearts that are separated can understand each other; at a distance aspirations are even more ardent than in proximity. Fear nothing! I shall be near enough to help you, to defend you, but not near enough to disturb or injure you. You did not see me, did you, during the time that I lived near you, watching your movements, counting your steps, living your life? Well, it will be so again; for I cannot obey your wish, — I cannot go away. Besides, what difference would it make? Would you, in any case, have thoughts of me?"

The queen made a movement which separated her from the young man. "It shall be as you please," said she; "but — you have understood me — I am not a coquette, Monsieur de Charny. It is the privilege of a queen to think what she says, and to say what she thinks. I avail myself of that privilege. One day, Monsieur, I distinguished you among those who surrounded me. I do not

know what drew my heart toward you. I thirsted for a friendship strong and pure ; and I allowed you to perceive this, did I not ? It is so no longer ; I no longer think as I thought then. Your soul is no longer kindred to my own. I avow it to you frankly. Let us spare each other."

"It is well, Madame ; I never thought that you had chosen me ; I never thought — Ah, Madame, I cannot bear the idea of losing you. Madame, I am mad with jealousy and fear. Madame, I will not suffer you to tear your heart from me ; it is mine, you have given it to me, and no one shall take it from me but with my life. Be a woman, be kind to me ; do not abuse my weakness, for just now you blamed me for my doubts, and now you crush me with your own."

"Heart of a child, — heart of a woman," said the queen, "you wish me to depend on you ! Fine protectors we should be for each other ! Weak, — oh, yes ; indeed you are weak, and I, alas ! am not stronger than you."

"I should not love you," murmured Charny, "were you other than you are."

"What !" exclaimed the queen, in tones of passionate eagerness, "this queen accursed ; this queen who is ruined ; this woman on whom parliament is to sit in judgment, whom public opinion will condemn, whom her husband, her king, will perhaps drive from him, — this woman still finds a heart that loves her ?"

"A servant who worships her, and who offers her all the blood of his heart in exchange for the tear she has just now shed."

"That woman," cried the queen, "is blessed, is proud, is the first among women, the happiest of all ! That woman is too happy, Monsieur de Charny ; I know not

how that woman could have complained, — forgive her ! ”

Charny fell at the feet of Marie Antoinette, and kissed them in a transport of religious love.

At that moment the door was thrown open, and the king appeared, trembling, thunderstruck, on the threshold. He had surprised the man accused by Monsieur de Provence at the feet of Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER XLI.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

THE queen and Charny exchanged glances so full of terror that their most cruel enemy would have pitied them both. Charny rose and saluted the king with profound respect.

"Ah," said the king, in a hollow voice, "Monsieur de Charny!"

The count replied only by another salutation. The queen felt that she was lost.

The king continued, "Monsieur de Charny, it is not honorable to a gentleman to be caught in the act of robbery."

"Robbery!" murmured Charny.

"Robbery!" repeated the queen, who seemed to hear again hissing in her ear those horrible accusations respecting the necklace, and imagined that the count was also about to be soiled by them.

"Yes," pursued the king; "kneeling before another's wife is robbery; and when that wife is a queen, Monsieur, we call it high treason."

The count was about to speak; he was about to protest his innocence, when the queen, eager in her generosity, not willing that the man she loved should be accused of an unworthy act, came to his aid. "Sire," she said eagerly, "it seems to me you are assuming a habit of evil suspicions and unfavorable suppositions which I warn you are unfounded. I see that respect enchains the count's tongue;

but I who know his goodness will not allow him to be accused without defending him." She paused, exhausted by her emotion, terrified at the falsehood which she would be obliged to invent, and in despair because she could think of none.

But this hesitation, which appeared so odious to the proud spirit of the queen, was really the salvation of the woman. In these horrible encounters, where the honor, even the life, of the woman surprised is often at stake, a minute gained is sufficient to save her, as a second lost is enough to ruin her. The queen by instinct had seized the favorable moment for delay ; she had checked the suspicions of the king, and restored the confidence of the court.

"Do you mean to say," replied Louis XVI., leaving the rôle of king to assume that of the anxious husband, "that I did not see Monsieur de Charny there on his knees before you, Madame? Now, when a man is permitted to kneel thus, it must be —"

"It must be, Monsieur," said the queen, severely, "that a subject of the queen of France has a favor to ask of her —"

"A favor to ask of you!" cried the king.

"And a favor I cannot grant," pursued the queen. "Otherwise, Monsieur de Charny would not have needed to entreat upon his knees, I assure you; and I should have joyfully granted his wish to a gentleman for whom I have a particular esteem."

Charny breathed again. The eye of the king had become uncertain; his brow had gradually relaxed from its unusual threatening air which surprise had caused it to assume.

Meanwhile Marie Antoinette, angry at being compelled to utter a falsehood, and in despair at not finding one to

utter, was searching distractedly for some plausible fiction. She had expected, by acknowledging herself powerless to grant the count the favor he solicited, to restrain the curiosity of the king, and had hoped that the examination would stop there. She was mistaken. Any other woman would have been more prudent by showing less haughtiness; but for her it was torture to utter an untruth before the man she loved. To exhibit herself in this false light was to conclude all the falsehoods and stratagems of the park intrigue by a denouement as infamous; it was almost acknowledging herself guilty, — it was worse than death. She hesitated still. She would have given her life that it might be Charny who should invent the lie; but he, the loyal gentleman, did not even think of doing so. He was afraid, in his delicacy, of seeming even disposed to defend the honor of the queen.

Marie Antoinette awaited in fearful suspense the question of the king.

"Come, Madame, what is this favor which Monsieur de Charny has solicited in vain, and for which he kneels before you? I shall perhaps be more happy than you, Madame, and Monsieur de Charny will not be under the necessity of kneeling before me."

"Sire, I told you that Monsieur de Charny asked something impossible."

"But tell me, at least, what it is."

"What can a man ask on his knees?" the queen asked herself; "what can he beg of me that it is impossible to grant? Let me see! let me see!"

"I am waiting," said the king.

"Sire, it is — what Monsieur de Charny asks is a family secret."

"There are no secrets from the king, — the sovereign of his kingdom, and a father interested in the honor and

safety of his subjects, who are his children, — even," added Louis XVI, with great dignity, "when these unnatural children attack the honor and the safety of their father."

"Monsieur de Charny," cried she, her mind disturbed and her hands trembling, "wished to obtain from me —"

"What, Madame?"

"Permission to marry."

"Really!" cried the king, at first reassured, then relapsing again into his jealous anxiety. "Well, then," he said, without remarking the suffering of the poor woman in uttering these words, or how pale Charny had become on seeing this suffering; "well, why is it impossible for Monsieur de Charny to marry? Is he not a man of good family? Has he not a handsome fortune? Is this woman whom Monsieur de Charny desires to marry a princess of the blood, or is she already married? Tell me her name, and if she be in neither of these two positions, I will remove every difficulty to please you."

The queen, induced by the still increasing danger, urged on by the consequences even of the first falsehood, replied quickly, "No, Monsieur, no; there are difficulties which even you cannot overcome."

"All the more reason that I should know the thing which is impossible to the king," interrupted Louis XVI., with rising anger.

Charny looked at the queen, who seemed about to fall. He would have gone to her but the king's immobility prevented him. By what right could he who was nothing to this woman, offer his hand or his assistance to her whom her husband and her king abandoned.

"What power is that?" she asked herself, "against which the king cannot contend? Give me this idea, give me this aid, my God!" Suddenly a gleam of light shot

across her mind. "Ah, God himself sends me this aid," she murmured. "Those who belong to God cannot be taken from him even by the king." Then, raising her head, "Monsieur," she said to the king, "the person Monsieur de Charny wishes to marry is in a convent."

"Ah," cried the king, "that is an objection; in fact it is very difficult to take from God that which is his, to give it to man. But it is strange that Monsieur de Charny should have conceived so sudden a passion; no one has ever spoken to me about it, — not even his uncle, who can obtain anything he asks of me. What is the name of this woman whom you love, Monsieur de Charny?"

The queen was in agony. She was about to hear a name pronounced by Olivier; she was about to undergo the tortures consequent upon her falsehood. Charny might utter the name of one formerly loved, — a still fresh memory of the past; or the name of one whom he was beginning to love, — a vague hope of the future. To escape this terrible blow, Marie Antoinette cried out suddenly: "Why, Sire, you know the person whom Monsieur de Charny asks to marry; it is — Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney."

Charny uttered a cry, and hid his face in his hands. The queen placed her hand upon her heart, and fell almost fainting upon her chair.

"Mademoiselle de Taverney!" repeated the king, — "Mademoiselle de Taverney, who has retired to the convent at Saint Denis?"

"Yes, Sire," the queen said in a weak voice.

"But I do not know that she has yet taken her vows?"

"But she is to take them."

"We will make a condition to that," said the king. "And yet," he added, with a remnant of mistrust, "why should she take vows?"

"She is poor," said Marie Antoinette; "you have enriched only her father," she added severely.

"That is a wrong I will repair, Madame; Monsieur de Charny loves her —"

The queen shuddered, and darted at the young man an eager look as if imploring him to deny it. Charny looked steadily at Marie Antoinette, and did not reply.

"It is well," said the king, who took this silence for respectful assent; "and doubtless Mademoiselle de Taverny loves Monsieur de Charny? I will give Mademoiselle de Taverny as dowry the five hundred thousand francs which, the other day, I refused to Monsieur de Calonne, who wanted them for you. Thank the queen, Monsieur de Charny, for relating to me this affair and securing the happiness of your life."

Charny took a step forward and bowed, — looking like a white statue to which, for a moment, life had been miraculously imparted.

"Oh, that is worth the trouble of getting down on your knees again," said the king, with a touch of that vulgarity which, in him, qualified the traditional nobility of his race.

The queen shuddered, and impulsively extended her hands to the young man. He kneeled down and kissed them, praying to God that in that kiss upon the queen's cold hands he might give up his life.

"Now," said the king, "we will leave to Madame the charge of your affairs. Come, Monsieur, come." He went out first, and so quickly that Charny was able to look back for an instant and see in the eyes of the queen the ineffable grief of an eternal farewell. Then the door was closed between them, — a barrier henceforth impassible to innocent love.

CHAPTER XLII.

SAINT DENIS.

THE queen remained alone, and in despair. So many blows had assailed her at the same time that she did not know which one had given her the most pain. After having remained an hour in this state of doubt and dejection, she said to herself that it was time to seek a way out of her difficulties. The danger was increasing. The king, proud of a victory he had obtained over appearances, would hasten to spread the report of it. It might happen that this report would be so received outside that the advantage to be gained by the deception would all be lost. That deception, alas! how the queen reproached herself with it; how gladly she would have recalled what she had said; how much she wished to take away, even from Andrée, the chimerical happiness which she would perhaps refuse.

Here was another difficulty. Who could be sure that so proud a person as Mademoiselle de Taverney would consent to sacrifice her liberty, or her future, for the advantage of a queen whom only a few days before she had left in enmity. Then, if Andrée should refuse, — and that was probable, — all this scaffolding of falsehood would fall. The queen would appear to be an intriguing woman of small intellect, Charny a mere liar, and the calumny would be transformed into an accusation, perhaps, of adultery.

Marie Antoinette felt that her reason was giving way under these reflections; she sank her burning head between her hands and meditated. In whom could she confide? Who was her friend, — Madame de Lamballe? Oh, she was pure reason, — cold and inflexible reason! She could think of no one but Mademoiselle de Taverney herself, whose invincible steadfastness and perfect purity would enable her to sympathize with the heavy sorrows of a queen. She would go then to Andrée, relate to her her misfortunes, and entreat her to sacrifice herself. Of course Andrée would refuse, because she was not one of those who allow themselves to be imposed upon; but by degrees, softened by her entreaties, she would consent. Besides, a delay might be obtained. The king, appeased by the apparent consent of the affianced parties, might finally forget. Then a voyage would settle everything, and after a while Charny and Andrée might declare that they had annulled their engagement; thus no one would surmise that the projected marriage had been a feint.

In this way the liberty of Mademoiselle de Taverney would escape being compromised; and Charny would not lose his own. The queen would not suffer from the remorse of having sacrificed the happiness of two beings to save her own honor; and yet that honor, which was also that of her husband and her children, would be transmitted unsullied to the future queen of France.

When she had fortified herself by these arguments and reflections, Marie Antoinette determined on going to Saint Denis.

It was then three o'clock, the hour at which a grand ceremonious dinner had been ordered; then came presentations and the reception of visits. The queen received everybody with a serene countenance, and an affability which did not derogate from her well-known pride. She

affected, even with those whom she considered her enemies, a calmness which is not ordinarily shown by guilty persons.

Never had there been so great a crowd at court; never had curiosity more narrowly investigated the features of a queen in peril. Marie Antoinette faced it all, confounded her enemies, and enchanted her friends. Those who were indifferent became zealous, and the zealous enthusiastic. Indeed, she appeared so lovely and so noble that the king publicly offered her his congratulations.

Then, when all this was over, laying aside her smiles, and resuming her painful thoughts, — alone, all alone in the world, — she changed her costume, put on a gray silk dress, and a gray hat trimmed with ribbons and blue flowers, entered her carriage, and without guards, accompanied only by one lady, she was driven to Saint Denis. She asked to see Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney in the parlor.

The latter, on her knees, wrapped in her white woollen robe, was watching through her window the moon rising behind the linden-trees, and in the poetry of the early night she found the theme of all the prayers, fervent and passionate, which she addressed to God to relieve the anguish of her soul. She was drinking in long draughts of the bitter pain of voluntary absence. This torture is known only to brave souls; it is at once a torture and a pleasure. It resembles in its anguish all ordinary griefs; at the same time it almost amounts to a pleasure, — which they alone can feel who know how to sacrifice happiness to pride.

Andrée had left the court of her own free will. Proud as Cleopatra, she could not bear the idea that Monsieur de Charny had thought of another woman, even if that woman were the queen. She had no proof of his burning

passion for another ; but had she not seen him pass by her indifferently ? Had she not suspected the queen of possessing, innocently no doubt, his homage and preference ? Of what use, after that, to remain at Versailles ? To beg for compliments ? To obtain from time to time the offer of an arm, or the help of a hand, when in their walks the queen would lend her the polite attentions of Charny, because she could not just at that moment accept them herself ?

No ; no cowardly weakness, no such compromise for this heroic soul. Life with love and preference ; the cloister with love and wounded pride ! "Never ! never !" the proud Andrée said to herself ; "he whom I love in secret ; he who is for me but a cloud, a portrait, a remembrance, — he never offends me, he always smiles on me, he smiles only on me."

Her mute contemplations of pure love, the divine ecstasies of the solitary dreamer, constituted a life more suited to the untamable Andrée than the brilliant fêtes at Versailles, where she would be under the necessity of bowing down before rivals, and would be haunted by the fear of divulging the secret shut up in her heart.

While Andrée was in the midst of her meditations, one of the sisters came to tell her that the queen was in the large parlor and wished to see her.

Strange thing ! Andrée, whose heart was softened by love, needed no more than this to make her spring forward to meet this perfume wafted to her from Versailles, — a perfume she had cursed the evening before, — the more precious in proportion as it was remote from her ; precious as everything which evaporates, as everything which is forgotten ; precious as love. "The queen," she murmured, — "the queen at Saint Denis ! The queen calls for me !"

Andrée threw over her shoulders the long mantle worn by nuns, and without pausing for a glance at her mirror, followed the sister who had come for her. But almost immediately she began to be ashamed of the joy she felt. "Why does my heart bound?" she said to herself. "How does it concern me that the queen comes hither? Come, be calm, unworthy nun; thou belongest neither to God nor to the world, — try, at least, to belong to thyself."

Thus Andrée reprimanded herself as she descended the stairs. Controlling herself, she banished from her cheeks the fugitive flush of haste, and checked the rapidity of her movements. When she entered the reception-room she was cold and pale. On hearing her name announced, and seeing Marie Antoinette in the chair of the abbess, and around her the most noble heads of the chapter bowed in reverence, Andrée was seized with a sudden agitation, and paused in her approach.

"Ah!" said the queen, half smiling; "come nearer, Mademoiselle; I wish to speak with you."

Andrée approached, and bowed her head.

"You will permit me, Madame?" said the queen, turning toward the superior.

The superior replied with a reverence, and left the salon, followed by the nuns.

The queen remained alone with Andrée.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A DEAD HEART.

THE queen opened the conversation. "You are here then, Mademoiselle," she said, with an expressive smile. "You make a strange impression on me, dressed thus as a nun."

Andrée made no reply.

"To see a former companion," continued the queen, "already lost to the world, in which we others continue to live, is like receiving a warning from the grave. Are you not of my opinion, Mademoiselle?"

"Who, then," replied Andrée, "would venture to give a warning to your Majesty? Even death cannot forewarn the queen."

"How is that?"

"Because, Madame, a queen is appointed, by virtue of her station, to endure in this world only the unavoidable hardships. All that can mitigate hardship, she possesses. All that another has which she can use for her own comfort, she takes from that other."

The queen made a movement of surprise.

"And that is her right," Andrée hastened to add. "Others are, to the queen, only so many subjects, whose property, honor, and life are hers."

"These are doctrines that astonish me," said the queen, speaking slowly. "You make of a sovereign, in this country, a sort of ogress who devours the fortunes and the happiness of the citizens. Am I a woman of

that kind, Andrée? Have you then really had occasion to complain of me?"

"Your Majesty had the goodness to ask me that question on the day I left you. I replied then, as I now reply, 'No, Madame.'"

"But sometimes," continued the queen, "one is wounded by an injury which is not personal to one's self. Have I, then, by offending any one in whom you are interested, deserved the harsh words that you have spoken? Andrée, the retreat which you have chosen is an asylum against all the evil passions of the world. God there teaches us gentleness, patience, forgetfulness of injuries. In coming hither to meet a sister in Jesus Christ, am I to find a forbidding face and bitter words? Must I, coming as a friend, encounter the reproaches, or the veiled hostility, of an irreconcilable enemy?"

Andrée raised her eyes, astounded by that gentleness of the queen, usually so haughty and severe toward her servants. "Her Majesty well knows," she said, "that the Taverneys cannot be enemies to the queen."

"I understand," replied the queen; "you cannot forgive me for my coldness to your brother; and he, perhaps, accuses me of fickleness, even of caprice."

"My brother is too respectful a subject to accuse the queen," said Andrée, maintaining the same unyielding formality.

The queen saw clearly that she would excite suspicion by increasing the dose of honey with which she had sought to pacify this Cerberus. She therefore made a pause. "At any rate," she resumed, "having occasion to come here to speak with Madame, I wished to see you and to assure you that I am always your friend."

Andrée perceived the change in the queen's tone. She feared that she had given offence; and she feared still

more that she had exposed her hidden wound to the clairvoyant eye of a woman. "Your Majesty covers me with honor and happiness," she said in a melancholy tone.

"Do not speak so, Andrée," replied the queen, pressing her hand; "you will break my heart. What! cannot a wretched queen have a friend in whom she can confide, and in whose eyes she may look without seeing there self-interest or resentment? Yes, yes, Andrée; direct your envy toward those queens, those mistresses of the fortunes, honor, and lives of all. Oh, yes, they are queens; they possess the gold and the blood of their subjects, — but their hearts? Never! never! Hearts cannot be taken; they must be given."

"I assure you, Madame," said Andrée, shaken by the warmth of these words, "that I have loved your Majesty as much as I shall ever love in this world." In saying these words she blushed and inclined her head.

"You — have — loved me!" said the queen; "You love me then no longer?"

"Oh, Madame!"

"I ask nothing of you, Andrée. Accursed be the cloister which so soon extinguishes memory in certain hearts."

"Do not blame my heart," said Andrée, quickly; "it is dead."

"Your heart is dead! You, Andrée, young and beautiful, — you say your heart is dead! Ah, do not trifle with those funereal words. The heart is not dead in one who still retains that smile, that beauty; do not say that, Andrée."

"I repeat to you, Madame, that nothing at the court, nothing in the world, has now any interest for me. I live here like the grass and the plants; and I have pleasure here which I alone can understand."

"What! you find pleasure in the convent?" exclaimed the queen.

"I adopt with happiness the life of retirement."

"There is nothing, then, which urges you toward the joys of the world?"

"Nothing."

"My God!" thought the queen, "am I not to succeed? I will tempt her; if that fails I will resort to entreaty. Oh, to entreat her to that! to entreat her to accept Monsieur de Charny, — great God, what wretchedness!"

The queen shuddered, but controlling her emotion, she said, "Andrée, you have expressed your contentment in such terms that you have robbed me of a hope which I had entertained."

"What hope, Madame?"

"We will not speak of it, since you are so decided."

"But, Madame, though it be only for your own satisfaction, explain to me —"

"To what purpose? You have retired from the world, have you not?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Willingly?"

"Oh, with all my heart!"

"And you are satisfied with the course you have taken?"

"More than ever."

"You see, then, it is superfluous for me to speak. God is my witness, I thought for a moment that I might make you happy."

"Me?"

"Yes, you, who were ungratefully upbraiding me. But now that you are cherishing other joys, — and you know better than I your own tastes, — I relinquish —"

"But, Madame, do me the honor to give me some idea."

"Oh, it is very simple ; I wished to draw you back to the court."

"Oh !" cried Andrée, with a bitter smile, "I return to court ! No, no ! Never, Madame !—much as it may cost me to disregard your Majesty's wishes."

The queen was much agitated. Her heart was filled with an indescribable grief. She, the mighty ship, was wrecked upon an atom of granite. "You refuse ?" she murmured, and to hide her distress, she covered her face with her hands.

Andrée, thinking her overcome with sorrow, knelt by her, and sought to mitigate the wound she had given to friendship, or to pride. "Come, now, tell me," she said, "what you would have done with me at court, — with me, a nobody, without fortune, under a ban, whom every one avoids because I am not even able — unfortunate that I am — to arouse in women the vulgar anxiety of rivalry, or in men the vulgar sympathy that springs from difference of sex. Ah, Madame, leave the poor nun to her retirement."

"Ah," said the queen, raising her eyes, "the position which I was about to offer you gives a direct contradiction to all the humiliations of which you complain. The marriage in question would have made you one of the first ladies in France."

"A — marriage !" stammered Andrée, stupefied.

"You refuse ?" said the queen, more and more discouraged.

"Oh, yes ; I refuse, I refuse !"

"Andrée —"

"I refuse, Madame ; I refuse."

Marie Antoinette then prepared herself, with an oppressed heart, to begin her entreaties. She arose, and stood undecided, trembling, distracted ; but before she

could utter the first word of her supplication, Andrée, seizing her robe, under the impression that she was going away, exclaimed, —

“At least, Madame, do me the kindness of naming to me the man who would accept me as his companion. I have suffered so many humiliations in my life that the name of that generous man —” she smiled with bitter irony — “will be,” she continued, “a balm which I shall henceforth apply to all wounds of my pride.”

The queen hesitated, but she was impelled to go on to the end. “Monsieur de Charny,” she said in a dull, indifferent tone.

“Monsieur de Charny!” cried Andrée, with a sudden explosion, “Monsieur Olivier de Charny!”

“Monsieur Olivier, yes,” said the queen, looking at the young girl in surprise.

“The nephew of Monsieur de Suffren?” continued Andrée, with glowing cheeks and eyes shining like stars.

“The nephew of Monsieur de Suffren,” replied the queen, more and more amazed at the sudden change in Andrée.

“It is to Monsieur Olivier that you wish to marry me?”

“To him.”

“And — he consents?”

“He asks for you in marriage.”

“Oh, I accept, I accept,” cried Andrée, wild with joy.

“It is I whom he loves! — I whom he loves as I love him!”

The queen, with a suppressed groan, drew back, pale and trembling. She fell, crushed, into an arm-chair, while the overjoyed Andrée kissed her knees and her robe, covered her hands with tears of delight, and devoured them with burning kisses.

"When shall we set out?" she asked at length, when she was able to speak.

"Come," murmured the queen, who felt as if her life were departing, and who wished, before dying, to save her honor. She rose, leaning on Andrée, whose ardent kisses sought her icy cheeks.

When Andrée left her to make ready for the departure, the queen exclaimed, "My God! is not this enough of suffering for a single heart? And yet, I thank thee. Thou hast saved my children from disgrace; thou hast given me the right to die wearing the royal mantle."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BARON UNDERSTANDS.

WHILE the queen was deciding the destiny of Mademoiselle de Taverney at Saint Denis, Philippe, whose heart was torn by all that he had discovered, pushed on his preparations for departure. A soldier, accustomed to range over the world, needs no long time to pack his trunks and put on his travelling-cloak ; and Philippe had special reason to hasten his departure from Versailles, — he would avoid witnessing the threatened dishonor of the queen. When he had completed his preparations, he sent word to Monsieur de Taverney the elder that he wished to speak with him.

The baron had just returned from the palace in a very agreeable state of mind. He had laid in a new supply of scandals and small infamies, and was happy. Instead, therefore, of waiting for Philippe to come to him, he himself on receiving the message went immediately to Philippe's room. He entered without warning, and found the room in that state of disorder which signifies an intended departure.

Philippe expected no outbreak of affectionate regret when his father should be informed of his purpose, nor, on the other hand, did he anticipate complete indifference. But he was greatly astonished on hearing his father cry out joyously, " Ah, very good ! he is going away ; he is going away ! "

Philippe looked at his father in surprise.

"I was sure of it," continued the baron; "I might have predicted it. Well played, Philippe, well played!"

"What do you mean, Monsieur? What is it that is well played?"

The old man winked at Philippe, as a sign to him to dismiss his valet. Philippe obeyed. The baron closed the door on the heels of the retiring valet, and then turning to Philippe, "Admirable!" he said in a low voice, — "admirable!"

"You bestow compliments on me, Monsieur," replied Philippe, "without my knowing how I have deserved them."

"Ah! ah! ah!" said the old man, dancing about.

"Unless all this hilarity, Monsieur, is occasioned by my departure, which rids you of my company."

"Oh! oh! oh!" laughed the old baron, on another note. "There, there, don't restrain yourself before me, — it is not worth while. You know I am not taken in — Ah! ah! ah!"

Philippe crossed his arms, and wondered if the old man was losing his mind. "Taken in by what?" he asked.

"By your departure of course. Do you imagine that I believe in your departure?"

"You do not believe in it?"

"Your servant is no longer here; there is no use in being so reserved. Well, I admit that you had no other course to take; you have taken this, — very good!"

"Monsieur, you surprise me."

"Yes; it is surprising enough that I should understand this matter. But Philippe, there is no man living more curious than I am; and when I am curious I investigate. There is no man more fortunate than I in making discoveries; and so I have found out that you are making a pretended departure, and I congratulate you."

"I am pretending?" said Philippe, in bewilderment.

The old man went up to him, touched his breast with his bony fingers, like those of a skeleton, and with a manner more and more confidential said, in a low tone, "On my word of honor, had you not resorted to this expedient I am sure all would have been discovered. You act in season; to-morrow would have been too late."

"Monsieur," said Philippe, in an icy tone, "I protest that I do not understand one word — one single word — of all that you have done me the honor to say to me."

"Where will you hide the horses?" continued the old man. "You have a mare that is easily recognized. Take care she is not seen when you are believed to be in — By the way, to what place do you pretend you are going?"

"I am going to Taverney-Maison-Rouge, Monsieur."

"Good, — very good. You pretend to go to Maison-Rouge. No one will go there to inquire. But be prudent; there are many eyes fixed on you both."

"On us both! Who, then?"

"She is impetuous, you know," continued the old man; "she has fits of passion that might ruin everything. Be careful; you must be more reasonable than she —"

"Why," said Philippe, with rising anger, "I really believe that you are seeking to amuse yourself at my expense. That is not kind; nor is it wise, for you expose me, sorrowful and irritated as I am, to a failure in my respect toward you."

"Ah, well, — respect; I dispense with it. You are old enough to manage your affairs, and you manage them so well that you inspire me with respect. Come, give me an address to which I may send you information, if anything should happen."

"To Taverney, Monsieur," said Philippe, thinking that the old man was coming to his senses.

"Eh! to Taverny, — eighty leagues. Do you imagine that when I may have urgent advice to give you, I shall amuse myself with killing couriers on the road to Taverny, for the sake of appearances? Come, now; I don't ask you to give your address at your house in the park, — my messengers might be followed, or my livery recognized; give me another address at a distance that may be covered in a quarter of an hour. What the devil! you have imagination. A man who does for his love affairs what you have done for yours is a man of resources."

"A 'house in the park,' 'love affairs,' 'imagination'! Monsieur, we are playing at enigmas, and you keep the key to yourself."

"Your reserve becomes offensive," said the father, angrily. "One would think you are afraid of being betrayed by me!"

"Monsieur!" said Philippe, exasperated.

"Very well; very well! Keep your secrets to yourself; keep the secret of the huntsman's lodge that you have hired."

"I — have hired the huntsman's lodge?"

"Keep the secret of your walks at night between two adorable friends."

"I — I have taken walks?" murmured Philippe, turning pale.

"Keep the secret of those kisses dropped like honey beneath the flowers and the dew."

"Monsieur!" roared Philippe, mad with jealousy, "will you be silent?"

"It is good, I say again; all that you have done, I have known. Had you any suspicion that I knew it? *Mor-dieu!* that should inspire you with confidence. Your intimacy with the queen, your prosperous adventures, your excursions to Apollo's Baths, — great God! these are life

and fortune to us all. Have no more fear of me, Philippe ; confide in me."

"Monsieur, you fill me with horror!" cried Philippe, covering his face with his hands.

It was really horror which the unhappy Philippe felt toward the man who attributed to him all the happiness of another, and who, intending to congratulate him, scourged him with the successes of his rival.

All that the father had learned and guessed, all that common rumor had ascribed to Monsieur de Rohan or the Comte de Charny, he had placed to the account of his son. According to his understanding of the matter, it was Philippe whom the queen loved, and by degrees was secretly lifting to the heights of favoritism.

When Philippe had discovered this new slough of infamy he shuddered, as he saw himself plunged into it by the one person who should have made a stand with him for honor. But the blow had been so violent that he remained stunned and silent, while the baron went on chattering with more energy than ever.

"See," said he, "you have achieved a master-stroke of art; you have thrown every one off the scent. This afternoon fifty eyes have said to me, 'It is Rohan.' A hundred have said to me, 'It is Charny.' Two hundred have said to me, 'It is Rohan and Charny.' Not one, mark you, not one said, 'It is Taverney.' I repeat, you have achieved a masterpiece, and the least I can do is to offer you my congratulations. It is a connection that honors you both, my dear fellow, — her, because she has taken you; you, because you have a hold on her."

At the moment when Philippe, now rendered furious, flashed lightning glances at the pitiless old man — glances portending a storm — the noise of a carriage was heard in the court-yard, and presently the valet was heard exclaim-

ing, "Mademoiselle ! it is Mademoiselle !" And several voices repeated, "Mademoiselle !"

"What ! Mademoiselle ?" said Taverney. "Who can it be ?"

"It is my sister !" murmured Philippe, at the window, seized with astonishment on recognizing Andrée as she alighted from a carriage.

"Your sister !" repeated the old man. "Andrée ? Is it possible ?"

The valet came, and informed Philippe that Andrée was in the boudoir adjoining the grand salon, and wished to see him.

"Let us go to her," cried the baron.

"It is to me that she wishes to speak," said Philippe, bowing to the old man ; "I will go first, if you please."

At that moment a second carriage rolled noisily into the court-yard.

"What the devil !" said the baron ; "still another ? This is an evening of adventures."

"Monsieur le Comte Olivier de Charny !" cried the guard to the footmen.

"Conduct Monsieur le Comte to the salon," said Philippe ; "Monsieur le Baron will receive him. I am going to the boudoir to speak with my sister."

The two men slowly descended the stairs.

"For what does the count come here ?" Philippe asked himself.

"For what has Andrée come here ?" the baron asked himself.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FATHER AND THE DAUGHTER.

THE salon of the hôtel was situated in the front part of the ground-floor. On its left was the boudoir, with a door opening upon the staircase leading to Andrée's apartment. To the right was another smaller salon, through which one must pass in order to enter the large salon.

Philippe went straight to the boudoir where his sister was waiting for him. As soon as he had opened the door Andrée rushed to meet him, throwing her arms about his neck with a joyful air, to which this sad lover, this unhappy brother, had been for a long time unaccustomed.

"Good Heavens! what can have happened?" asked the young man.

"Something happy! oh, yes, something very happy, brother!"

"And you have come here to tell me of it?"

"I shall never go back!" cried Andrée, in a transport of joy.

"Speak lower, little sister," said Philippe; "the wainscoting of this house is not accustomed to joyful sounds; and more than that, there is in the little room next us a person who will hear you."

"A person?" said Andrée, "who can it be?"

"Listen," replied Philippe.

"Monsieur le Comte de Charny!" said the valet, announcing Olivier as he passed from the small parlor into the salon.

"He! he!" cried Andrée, redoubling her caresses to her brother. "Oh, I know what he has come for!"

"You know it?"

"Yes, I know it,—so well that I perceive the disordered state of my dress; and as I foresee the moment when I shall myself enter that salon to hear with my own ears what Monsieur de Charny has to say—"

"Do you speak seriously, my dear Andrée?"

"Listen, listen, Philippe! and then let me go up to my own room. The queen has brought me back somewhat hastily; I am about to exchange my convent-robe for the attire—of a betrothed." And when she had spoken this word to Philippe in a very low tone, and accompanied it with a joyous kiss, Andrée, buoyant with happiness, ran up the stairs to her apartment.

Philippe remained alone, and putting his ear to the door communicating with the salon, listened. Monsieur de Charny was already there. The Baron de Taverney, in his turn, came into the room, and advanced to salute the count with studied politeness.

"To what," he said, "do I owe the honor of this unexpected visit, Monsieur le Comte? At all events, I beg you to believe that it overwhelms me with joy."

"I have come, Monsieur, ceremoniously, as you see, and I beg you will excuse me for not bringing with me my uncle, Monsieur de Suffren, as I ought to have done."

"What!" stammered the baron; "but I excuse you, my dear Monsieur de Charny."

"It would have been more consistent with propriety, I know, considering the request I am about to make."

"A request?" said the baron.

"I have the honor," said Charny, in a voice full of

emotion, "to ask of you the hand of Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney, your daughter."

"My daughter!" murmured the baron; "you ask of me Andrée in marriage?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Baron; unless Mademoiselle de Taverney should feel some repugnance to this union."

"How is this?" thought the old man. "Can the favor of Philippe have already become so marked that one of his rivals hopes, by marrying his sister, to profit by it? Upon my word, not so badly played, Monsieur de Charny!" Then aloud, with a smile, "This suit is so honorable for our house, Monsieur le Comte," he said, "that I accept it with much pleasure, as far as I am concerned; and as I desire that you should bear with you a full consent, I will go to call my daughter."

"Monsieur," interrupted the count, coldly, "that would be unnecessary trouble. The queen has been kind enough to consult Mademoiselle de Taverney on this subject, and your daughter's reply was favorable to me."

"Ah!" said the baron, more and more astounded, "it is the queen —"

"Who has taken the trouble to go to Saint Denis; yes, Monsieur."

The baron rose. "There only remains for me, then, to inform you as to the condition of Mademoiselle de Taverney's pecuniary affairs. I have upstairs the deeds of her mother's property. You do not marry a rich girl, Monsieur le Comte; and before deciding anything —"

"There is no need of it, Monsieur le Baron," said Charny, dryly. "I am rich enough for both; and Mademoiselle de Taverney is not the sort of woman to be bargained for. But it is indispensable that I should make some statement of my own affairs."

He had just finished these words when the door of the

boudoir opened, and Philippe appeared, pale and agitated, one hand in the breast of his coat, and the other convulsively clinched.

Charny bowed ceremoniously, and Philippe responded in the same manner.

"Monsieur," said Philippe, "my father was quite right to propose to inform you as to the pecuniary condition of the family; we both of us have explanations to make. While Monsieur le Baron goes to find the papers of which he speaks, I shall have the honor of considering the question with you more in detail;" and Philippe, with a look of authority not to be disregarded, dismissed the baron, who went out ill at ease, fearing that something was about to happen which would prevent this marriage.

Philippe accompanied the baron to the door of the little parlor, in order to be sure that this room was empty. Then returning, "Monsieur de Charny," he said, crossing his arms as he stood before the count, "how is it that you dare to ask my sister in marriage? Is it in order better to conceal your love for that woman whom you pursue, — with that woman whom you love? Is it because if you were married it perhaps would not be said so freely that you had a mistress?"

"Indeed, Monsieur," said Charny, staggering.

"Is it," added Philippe, "that having become the husband of a woman who would be always about your mistress, you would have greater facilities for seeing this adored mistress?"

"Monsieur, you are going beyond all bounds."

"It is, perhaps, — and I think this more apt to be the case," continued Philippe, drawing nearer to Charny, — "you think, doubtless, that having become your brother-in-law I should not disclose what I know of your past love."

"What you know?" cried Charny, terrified. "Take care! take care!"

"Yes," said Philippe, becoming excited; "your renting the wolf-hunter's lodge, your mysterious walks in the park of Versailles in the night, your pressing of hands, your sighs, and especially that tender interchange of glances at the small gate of the park —"

"Monsieur, in the name of Heaven! — Monsieur, say that you know nothing of all this!"

"I know nothing!" cried Philippe, with bitter irony. "How know nothing? — I who was concealed in the shrubbery behind Apollo's Baths when you came out with the queen on your arm!"

Charny started back two paces like a man who had received his death-blow. Philippe looked at him in stern silence. He let him suffer; he let him expiate by this momentary torture the hours of ineffable delight with which he had just reproached him.

Charny recovered his self-control. "Well, Monsieur," he said to Philippe, "even after what you have said, I ask of you the hand of Mademoiselle de Taverney. If I were only a mean calculator, as you accused me of being only a moment ago, — if I were about to marry for my own sake, I should be so miserable that I should be afraid of a man who possesses my secret and that of the queen. But the queen must be saved, Monsieur!"

"And in what manner is the queen lost? Because Monsieur de Taverney saw her press the arm of Monsieur de Charny and raise to heaven her eyes moist with happiness? Is the queen lost because I know that she loves you? Oh, that is no reason for sacrificing my sister, Monsieur; and I will not allow her to be sacrificed."

"Monsieur," replied Olivier, "shall I tell you why the queen is lost if this marriage does not take place? It is

because this very morning, while Monsieur de Rohan was being arrested, the king surprised me on my knees before the queen."

"My God !"

"And the queen, questioned by the jealous king, replied that I was kneeling to ask of her the hand of your sister. That is the reason, Monsieur, why the queen will be lost if I do not marry your sister. Do you understand now ?"

A two-fold noise cut short Olivier's sentence, — a shriek and a sigh. The one came from the boudoir, and the other from the little parlor. Olivier ran to the room from which the sigh had come ; he saw Andrée de Taverney dressed in white like a bride. She had heard all, and had fainted. Philippe ran to the little parlor from which the cry had issued. He there saw the body of the Baron de Taverney, whose hopes this revelation of the queen's love for Charny had completely crushed. The baron, struck with apoplexy, had breathed his last ; and the prediction of Cagliostro was fulfilled.

Philippe, who comprehended everything, even the disgrace of this death, silently left the dead body, and returned to the salon where Charny was contemplating, trembling, and without daring to touch it, this beautiful girl, now cold and inanimate.

Philippe, with swelling heart, his eyes wet with tears, had the courage to resume the conversation by saying to Monsieur de Charny, "Monsieur le Baron de Taverney has just died. I am now the head of my family. If Mademoiselle de Taverney survives, I will give her to you in marriage."

Charny looked at the baron's dead body with horror, at the form of Andrée in despair. Philippe tore his hair with his hands, and uttered to Heaven a cry which might move the heart of God upon his eternal throne.

"Comte de Charny," he said, after having quieted the tempest within him, "I make this engagement for my sister, who does not hear me. She will sacrifice her happiness for the queen, and I may sometime be happy enough to give my life for her. Adieu, Monsieur de Charny; adieu, my brother-in-law," and bowing to Olivier, who could not leave the room without passing near one of the two victims, Philippe raised Andrée in his arms and gave free passage to the count, who went out through the boudoir.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AFTER THE DRAGON, THE VIPER.

It is now time to return to those personages of our history whom necessity and intrigue as well as historical truth have forced into the background.

Oliva was getting ready for flight according to Jeanne's advice, when Beausire, informed by an anonymous letter, — Beausire, panting with impatience to see Nicole once more, found himself conducted right into her arms. He carried her away from Cagliostro's house while Monsieur Reteau de Villette was waiting in vain at the end of the Rue du Roi-Doré.

In order to find the happy lovers whom Monsieur de Crosne had so much interest in discovering, Madame de La Motte, who felt sure that she had been duped, set every person on whom she could rely to search the country for them. It may be easily imagined that she would prefer watching over her secret herself to leaving it to the care of others, and for the success of the plan she had in hand it was indispensable that Nicole should not be forthcoming. It is impossible to depict her suffering as each of her emissaries returned with a report that their search was unavailing. At this time, also, she was receiving, in her hiding-place, order after order to appear before the queen to answer for her conduct with regard to the necklace. One night, closely veiled, she set out for Bar-sur-Aube, where she had a small house; and having

arrived there by cross-roads and without being recognized, she took time to examine her position in its true light. She thus gained two or three days in which to commune with herself. Two days of such solitude would be sufficient to this profound soul for the struggle through which she must pass before so mastering body and mind that her conscience, being discharged from service, would not return, and that her blood might not mount to her face to betray shame or surprise.

The king and queen, who had instituted a search for her, were not informed of her having established herself at Bar-sur-Aube until she had already prepared herself for war. They sent a messenger to bring her back to Versailles.

At about the same time Jeanne heard of the cardinal's imprisonment. "The queen has burned her ships," she coldly meditated. "It is impossible for her to revoke what she has done. In refusing to come to an understanding with the cardinal and pay the jewellers she is playing double or quits. That proves that she is acting without reference to me, and that she has no suspicion of the forces at my command."

While Jeanne was contemplating thus her defensive armor, a messenger suddenly presented himself before her and announced that he was charged *to return her to the court.*

The messenger proposed to take Jeanne directly to the king; but she, with her usual cunning, said to him, "Monsieur, you love the queen, do you not?"

"Can you doubt it, Madame la Comtesse?"

"Well, then, in the name of that loyal love, and of the respect you cherish for the queen, I adjure you to conduct me first to her."

The officer objected.

"You must know," said Jeanne, "even better than I, what is in question ; and therefore you must know that it is necessary for the queen to have a secret interview with me."

The messenger, acquainted with the calumnious rumors that filled the air of Versailles, concluded that he would really render a service to the queen by taking Madame de La Motte to her at once.

Imagine the haughtiness and pride of the queen on seeing in her presence that demon whom as yet she did not know, but whose treacherous influence in her affairs she suspected. Imagine Marie Antoinette, inconsolably widowed in her love, blighted by the breath of scandal ; Marie Antoinette, crushed by the insult of an accusation which she could not refute, — imagine her, after so many sufferings preparing to put her foot on the head of the serpent which had bitten her.

Supreme disdain, anger unrestrained, the hatred of woman for woman, the sense of an incomparable superiority in position, — such were the weapons of one of the adversaries. The queen began by calling in two of her women as witnesses.

Cast-down eyes, closed lips, a reverence slow and solemn, a heart full of mysteries, a mind full of ideas, despair her impelling power, — such was the second champion.

Madame de La Motte, on seeing the two witnesses, said to herself, "Good ! here are two witnesses who will very soon be dismissed."

"Ah, here you are at last, Madame !" cried the queen. "You have been found at last !"

Jeanne bowed a second time.

"You were in hiding then ?" said the queen, impatiently.

"I in hiding ! No, Madame," in a soft and slightly tremulous voice, as if she were oppressed by the royal

presence; "had I been in hiding I should not have been found."

"You had fled, however, — call it as you please."

"That is to say, I left Paris, — yes, Madame."

"Without my permission?"

"I did not think my presence so necessary to your Majesty that I must give you notice of a week's absence."

"Eh! you are right, Madame. Do you, then, hold any office at court?"

There was too much contempt in these last words. "Madame," she replied, with humility, "I hold no office at court, it is true; but your Majesty honored me with a confidence so precious to me that I held myself more bound to you by gratitude than others are by official duty."

Jeanne had found that word "confidence" after a search for the fitting word, and laid much stress upon it.

"That 'confidence,'" said the queen, with a contempt more crushing than before, "we shall give its place in the account. Have you seen the king?"

"No, Madame."

"You will see him."

Jeanne bowed. "That will be a great honor for me," she said.

The queen for a moment sought to calm herself that she might enter properly upon the examination. Jeanne took advantage of the pause to exclaim, "But, *mon Dieu!* Madame, how harsh your Majesty is toward me! I tremble all over."

"You have not reached the end," said the queen, abruptly. "Do you know that Monsieur de Rohan is in the Bastille?"

"I have been told so, Madame."

"You of course know the cause of his imprisonment?"

Jeanne looked steadily at the queen, and turning toward

the two women, whose presence seemed to annoy her, replied, "I do not know, Madame."

"You know, however, that you have spoken to me of a necklace, do you not?"

"A diamond necklace, — yes, Madame."

"And that in the name of the cardinal you proposed an arrangement for the purchase of that necklace?"

"That is true, Madame."

"Did I accept or refuse that arrangement?"

"Your Majesty refused."

"Ah!" said the queen, with satisfaction, and also with surprise.

"Your Majesty even gave two hundred thousand francs on account," added Jeanne.

"Well, — afterward?"

"Your Majesty, not being able to pay, sent back the diamonds to the jewellers."

"By whom did I send them?"

"By me."

"And you, what did you do with them?"

"I," said Jeanne, deliberately, and conscious of the weight of the words she was about to speak, "I gave them to Monsieur le Cardinal."

"To Monsieur le Cardinal! And why, if you please, instead of returning them to the jewellers?"

"Because, Madame, Monsieur de Rohan being interested in the affair, — to give pleasure to your Majesty, — I should have wounded him had I not given him the opportunity to bring it to a proper conclusion."

"How then did you obtain from the jewellers a receipt for the necklace?"

"Monsieur de Rohan gave me that receipt."

"And that letter which it is said you gave the jewellers as coming from me?"

"Monsieur de Rohan begged me to deliver it."

"It is then Monsieur de Rohan who is at the bottom of this affair?"

"I do not understand your Majesty," said Jeanne, assuming a vacant air.

"That receipt from the jewellers is a forgery!"

"A forgery!" innocently exclaimed Jeanne. "Oh, Madame!"

"The pretended letter of acceptance, signed, it is said, by me, is a forgery!"

"Oh!" cried Jeanne, apparently more astonished than before.

"You will have to be confronted with the Cardinal de Rohan, that the affair may be cleared up."

"Confronted! Why, Madame, what need is there for my being confronted with the cardinal?"

"He himself demands it."

"He?"

"He has sought you everywhere."

"But, Madame, it is impossible."

"He wished to prove to you, he said, that you had deceived him."

"Oh, then, Madame, I demand to be confronted with him."

"You will be, Madame, you may rest assured. So then you deny knowing where the necklace is?"

"How should I know?"

"You deny having aided Monsieur le Cardinal in certain intrigues?"

"Your Majesty has every right to disgrace me, but none to insult me. I am a Valois, Madame."

"The cardinal has maintained, in the king's presence, calumnies which he expects to support by serious proof."

"I do not understand."

"The cardinal declares that he has written to me."

Jeanne looked steadily at the queen, and made no reply.

"Do you hear me?" asked the queen.

"I hear, yes, your Majesty."

"And what do you reply?"

"I will reply when I am confronted with Monsieur le Cardinal."

"Meanwhile, if you know the truth, give us your assistance?"

"The truth, Madame, is that your Majesty blames me without cause, and is severe toward me without reason."

"That is not an answer."

"I shall however make no other here, Madame," and Jeanne looked again toward the two women.

The queen understood, but did not yield. Her curiosity could not prevail over her self-respect. The whole attitude of Jeanne seemed to indicate that she was in possession of an important secret. Perhaps by gentleness the queen might win from her that secret; but she rejected that method as unworthy of her.

"Monsieur de Rohan has been sent to the Bastille," said Marie Antoinette, "for saying too much; beware, Madame, of incurring the same fate through saying too little."

Jeanne dug into her hands with her nails, but she smiled. "To a pure conscience," she said, "what matters persecution? Will the Bastille convict me of a crime that I have not committed?"

The queen looked at Jeanne angrily. "Will you speak?" she asked.

"I have nothing to say, Madame, except to you."

"To me? Very well, is it not to me that you are now speaking?"

"Not to you alone."

"Ah, that is it!" cried the queen. "You wish for secrecy, for closed doors. You fear the scandal of a public avowal, after inflicting on me the scandal of public suspicion."

Jeanne drew herself up. "Let us say no more about it," she said. "I was proposing to render you a service."

"What insolence!"

"I submit respectfully to the wrongs inflicted by my queen," said Jeanne, without changing color.

"You will sleep in the Bastille to-night, Madame de La Motte."

"Be it so, Madame. But before going to bed I shall, as usual, pray that God will preserve to your Majesty honor and happiness."

The queen, rising in great anger, went into the adjoining chamber, and violently slammed the door. "After overcoming the dragon," said she, "I shall certainly crush the viper."

"I know her game by heart," thought Jeanne. "I think that I have won."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE PURSUER OVERTAKEN.

MADAME DE LA MOTTE was imprisoned, as the queen had wished. Nothing could be more agreeable to the king, who instinctively hated the woman.

Meantime the Cardinal de Rohan was living at the Bastille as a nobleman might have lived in a hired house. Everything was granted him on demand, except liberty.

The law-proceedings were at first of a trivial character, considering the rank of the persons accused. There was great astonishment that a Rohan should be charged with theft, and for that reason the governor of the Bastille and all the officers showed great deference and respect to the cardinal as to a person who was unfortunate. To them he was not a person accused, but a man who had fallen out of favor; and when it was rumored that he was a victim to the intrigues of the court, public sympathy rose to public enthusiasm. And Monsieur de Rohan, one of the chief nobles of the kingdom, did not understand that the love of the people was bestowed on him only for the reason that he was persecuted by those more noble than he. The last victim of despotism, he was in fact one of the earliest revolutionists in France.

Since the day of his incarceration the cardinal had persistently demanded to be confronted with Madame de La Motte, and at length he obtained that satisfaction. His interview with her was marked by a noticeable incident. The countess, who was permitted to speak low whenever

she spoke of the queen, at last succeeded in saying to the cardinal, "Send every one away, and I will give you the information you want."

Then Monsieur de Rohan expressed a desire to be left alone with the countess ; but this was refused. His counsel, however, was permitted to have an interview with her. In this interview Jeanne denied all knowledge as to what had become of the necklace, and broadly intimated that it should have been given to her. And when the counsel cried out, astounded by this audacity, she asked him if the service she had rendered to the queen and the cardinal was not worth a million.

The advocate repeated this to the cardinal, who turned pale and bowed his head ; he saw that he had fallen into a trap. But while he was thinking that he must stifle the affair before it should bring ruin to the queen, it was represented to him that his honor was at stake ; accused as he was of theft he must push the matter to a verdict, that his innocence might be established. But to prove his innocence it would be necessary to prove his relations with the queen, — that is to say, her criminality.

When this consideration was presented to Jeanne she replied that she was not disposed to accuse either the queen or the cardinal, but if they persisted in making her responsible for the necklace she might be obliged to show that the queen and the cardinal had a secret reason for charging her with falsehood.

When these words were reported to the cardinal he expressed his scorn for her who could thus speak of sacrificing him. He added that up to a certain point he could understand Jeanne's conduct, but the queen's he could not understand at all.

The queen, in her turn, was informed of what the cardinal had said, and became very angry. She directed a pri-

vate examination to be made as to the mysterious phases of the affair. The great grievance of the nocturnal interviews then came out, and was enlarged upon by scandal-mongers. Then the queen found herself in danger. Jeanne, when in presence of those who represented the queen, declared that she understood nothing of what was said to her; but with those who represented the cardinal, she was less discreet, and frequently reiterated, "If they do not leave me in peace I will speak out."

This delicate reserve, this modesty, so complicated the situation that no examining judge dared to prosecute the inquiry.

Had the cardinal been less firm, — more ready to speak? Had he to some friend avowed his love-secret? We ought not so to think, for the prince was a noble-hearted and devoted man. But whether he had spoken or not, a rumor that he had been at Apollo's Baths with the queen, at midnight, was spread around. The question was not now, "Did the queen steal the diamonds?" — a question sufficiently dishonoring, — but, "Has the queen permitted the necklace to be stolen by some one who had penetrated the secret of her adulterous love?"

Thus Madame de La Motte had succeeded in averting the difficulty. Thus the queen found herself forced into a path which could lead only to dishonor. She was not cast down; she resolved to fight. The king supported her resolution; the ministry also sustained her with all their resources.

From this time all the enginery of the prosecution was directed against Jeanne, and a diligent search was made for the necklace. The queen, by accepting the issue as presented, threw back upon Jeanne the crushing charge of robbery.

Jeanne perceived that she had taken a false course, and

that the queen, in submitting to the accusation of infidelity and withstanding public opinion, engaged the cardinal to imitate her. She was sure that these two loyal souls would at last come to an understanding, and would fathom the mystery. Even if they should fall, they would in their fall crush beneath them the little Valois, princess of a stolen million, who had no money at hand to bribe the judges.

While affairs were in this state an incident occurred which changed their complexion.

Monsieur de Beausire and Mademoiselle Oliva were living prosperously and happily in the country, when one day Beausire, who had left Oliva at home while he went hunting, fell into company with two of the detectives whom Monsieur de Crosne had scattered over all France in search for the key to this intrigue.

The two lovers knew nothing of what was happening at Paris ; they were thinking only of themselves. Beausire on that day had started out to chase the hare. He started a covey of partridges, which drew him out of his course. And thus in looking for that of which he was not in search, he found what he did not wish to find. The detectives too were searching for Oliva, and found Beausire. Such are the usual caprices of the chase.

One of these detectives was a person of intelligence. When he was sure of his man, instead of making the arrest then and there, he said to his companion, "Beausire hunts ; he is therefore free and prosperous. He perhaps has five or six louis in his pocket, and two or three hundred at home. Let us therefore arrest him at home, and make him pay a ransom."

Thereupon they followed Beausire wherever he went, and joined in his sport with ostentatious eagerness.

Beausire, observing them, was at first astonished, then

angry. But being still reluctant to make new acquaintances, he sent his gamekeeper to question them. The strangers replied that they were shooting with their friend, the gentleman yonder, pointing to Beausire. The gamekeeper therefore conducted them to him.

"Monsieur de Linville," said the gamekeeper, "these gentlemen say that they are shooting with you."

"With me!" cried Beausire, angrily. "Ah, indeed!"

"So, then," said one of the detectives, in a low tone, "you are Monsieur de Linville, my dear Beausire?"

Beausire was startled; he had so carefully concealed his name. He looked at the men with a frightened air, and dismissed the gamekeeper.

"You know them, then?" said the latter.

"Yes; we have recognized one another," replied one of the detectives.

Beausire was then left alone with the strangers, very uncertain how he could speak to them without compromising himself.

"Ask us to breakfast, Beausire," said the more adroit detective, "at your house."

"At my house! but —" cried Beausire.

"You will not be so impolite to us, Beausire!"

Beausire lost his self-possession, and led them, or rather was led by them, to his house. The detectives, as soon as they saw the house, began to praise its beauty, its situation, and the fine view it commanded. "How well," said one of them, "a man might hide himself here!"

Beausire shuddered at this pleasantry, and led the way into his court-yard, welcomed by the barking of his dogs. The detectives followed him, with every observance of ceremony.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE TURTLE-DOVES ARE CAGED.

BEAUSIRE had his reasons for entering by the court-yard gate; he wished to make noise enough to put Oliva on her guard. Beausire, although knowing nothing of the affair of the necklace, knew enough about the Opera-ball and Mesmer's vat to dread Oliva's being seen by strangers. He acted wisely; for the young woman, hearing the dogs bark, looked down into the court, and saw that Beausire was accompanied by two men; therefore she did not go down to meet him as usual. Unfortunately, it being necessary to order breakfast, an awkward servant asked two or three times if he should get directions from Madame. This word attracted the attention of the two bloodhounds. They rallied Beausire very pleasantly upon this concealed lady. Beausire allowed them to jest, but did not allow them to see Oliva.

A substantial repast was served, to which the two agents of Monsieur de Crosne did honor. They drank a great deal, and frequently to the health of the absent lady. The police agents thinking it inhuman to prolong the suspense of their host, adroitly led the conversation to the subject of the pleasure of meeting old acquaintances. Beausire asked in what place and under what circumstances he could have met them before.

"We were," said one of them, "the friends of one of your associates in a little affair you entered into in com-

pany with several others, — the affair of the embassy of Portugal."

Beausire turned pale. "Ah, certainly," he said, trembling with embarrassment, "and you come in behalf of your friend?"

"That is a good idea," one of the men said to the other; "to demand restitution in the name of an absent friend is a moral action."

"My dear Monsieur Beausire, it would be agreeable to us if you would return to one of us that friend's share, — about ten thousand francs, I believe."

"At the very least; for we will say nothing of interest," said the positive companion.

"Gentlemen," replied Beausire, "a man does not keep ten thousand francs in his house in the country."

"We understand that, dear Monsieur; and we do not ask the impossible. How much could you give us at once?"

"I have fifty or sixty louis, — no more."

"We will take those to begin with, and thank you for your courtesy."

"Ah," thought Beausire, charmed at their easy way of arranging matters, "they are easily satisfied! Are they, perchance, as much afraid of me as I am of them? Let us try;" and he began to reflect that these gentlemen, were they to cry out very loudly, would only the more clearly acknowledge themselves his accomplices, which with the provincial authorities would be a bad recommendation. Beausire concluded that these men would declare themselves perfectly satisfied, and would preserve an absolute silence. He even went so far as to repent not having offered them thirty louis instead of sixty; he meant to get rid of them, however, as soon as he had paid them that amount.

But he reckoned without his guests; they were too comfortable under his roof, and were enjoying that blissful content arising from a good digestion.

"Beausire is a charming friend," said the positive to his friend. "The sixty louis he has given us are pleasant to take."

"I will give them to you immediately," cried the host, alarmed to see his guests breaking out into somewhat bacchanalian familiarity.

"There is no hurry," said the two friends.

"Yes, yes; I shall not have a free conscience until I have paid you. One either has delicate feelings, or he has not," and he was about to leave them to get the money.

A good sheriff's officer, having once caught his victim, never lets him escape from his grasp or his sight. Therefore both the men, with admirable accord, began to cry out, "Monsieur Beausire! my dear Beausire!" and they seized him by the skirt of his green shooting-jacket.

"What is the matter?" asked Beausire.

"Do not leave us, for mercy's sake!" they said, forcing him to sit down again.

"But how can I give you the money if you do not let me go upstairs for it?"

"We will go with you," replied the positive, with alarming tenderness.

"But it is — my wife's chamber," replied Beausire.

"Oh, indeed!" cried the first of the agents, "why do you conceal your wife from us?"

"Yes," said the second. "Are we not presentable?"

"If you knew what we are doing for you, you would be more polite," continued the first.

"And you would give us all that we ask," added the second, boldly.

"It seems to me that you are taking a very high tone, gentlemen," said Beausire.

"We want to see the wife," replied the positive.

"And I declare to you that I will put you both out of doors," cried Beausire, who thought that he was stronger than they, intoxicated as they were.

They replied by a burst of laughter which should have made him prudent. He paid no attention to it, and obstinately continued, "Now you shall not have even the money I promised you, and you shall get out of the way at once."

They laughed more obstreperously than before.

Beausire, trembling with rage, said, "I understand you. You will make a noise, and you will speak out; but if you speak of these things you will be ruined as well as I."

They continued to laugh; the joke seemed a pleasant one. It was their only answer.

Beausire thought he could terrify them with a vigorous measure, and rushed toward the staircase, not like a man who is going in search of louis, but like a furious man who goes in quest of a weapon. The officers rose from the table, and ran after Beausire, and caught hold of him with their strong hands. The latter cried out; a door opened and a woman appeared, agitated, terrified, upon the threshold. When they saw her the two men let Beausire go, and uttered a cry, — a cry of joy, of triumph, of wild delight. They recognized the woman who resembled so strongly the queen of France.

Beausire, who thought that the men were disarmed by the appearance of a woman, was soon and cruelly undeceived. The positive approached Mademoiselle Oliva, and in a tone not very polite, "Ah, ah," he said, "I arrest you!"

"Arrest her!" cried Beausire; "and why?"

"Because Monsieur de Crosne has ordered us to do so," replied the other agent, "and because we are in the service of Monsieur de Crosne."

"You see what comes of not behaving prettily," said the positive to Beausire.

This agent was not logical, and his companion remarked to him, "You are wrong, for if Beausire had behaved more prettily, he would have introduced us to Madame, and so in any case we should have taken her."

Beausire had pressed both hands to his burning forehead. An idea presented itself to him; it at once revived him. "Did you come to arrest me?" he said to the agents.

"No, that was mere chance," they said innocently.

"No matter, you might have arrested me, and for sixty louis you would have set me at liberty."

"Oh, no; our intention was to demand sixty more."

"And we have really received only a promise; now for one hundred and twenty louis we will give you your liberty."

"But — Madame?" said Beausire, trembling.

"Oh, Madame, — that is different," replied the positive.

"Madame is worth two hundred louis, you mean?"

The detectives again broke out with that terrible laugh, which now, alas! Beausire understood.

"Three hundred," he said, "four hundred — a thousand louis if you will leave her at liberty." Beausire said this with flashing eyes. "You do not answer," he continued. "You know that I have money, and you mean to make me pay. Very well; I will give you two thousand louis, — forty-eight thousand francs, — a fortune for both of you, if you will leave her at liberty."

"You love her very much then," said the positive.

It was Beausire's turn to laugh ; and his ironical laughter was so frightful, it declared so vividly his love and desperation, that the two detectives judged it prudent to take some precautions. They drew each a pair of pistols.

"Not for a hundred thousand crowns," said one of them, "would we give up this woman. The Cardinal de Rohan will pay us five hundred thousand francs for her, and the queen a million."

Beausire raised his eyes with an expression which would have softened the heart of any other savage beast than an agent of police.

"Come, let us be going," said the positive. "You must have here a carriage of some sort ; have it made ready for Madame, — you owe her as much as that."

"And as we are good fellows," said the other, "we will take no advantage of you. We will arrest you for form's sake, but on the road will allow you to escape. Is n't that generous, eh ?"

"Wherever she goes," replied Beausire, "I will go. I will never leave her while this life lasts."

"Oh, nor in the other !" added Oliva, frigid with terror.

"Well, so much the better," said the positive ; "the more prisoners we bring to Monsieur de Crosne, the more he laughs."

A quarter of an hour later, Beausire's carriage set forth from his house, with the two captive lovers and their guards.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE QUEEN'S LIBRARY.

THE effect produced by this capture on Monsieur de Crosne may be imagined. He repaired to Versailles in a carriage, which was followed by another carefully closed. He ordered the two carriages to be driven to Trianon, and there he alighted, leaving the closed carriage in charge of his clerk. He had previously sent to the queen a request that she would meet him there.

When Monsieur de Crosne was admitted to the presence of the queen, she at once inferred from his radiant manner that he was the bearer of good news.

"Madame," said the magistrate, after he had kissed her hand, "is there here a room from which you can see all that happens in an adjoining room without being seen yourself?"

"There is my library," replied the queen, "into which I can look from the breakfast-room, through openings specially designed for that purpose."

"Very good, Madame. Be pleased, then, to go with me into the breakfast-room, and give orders that my clerk may be admitted to the library, with what he brings."

Ten minutes later, the queen with much agitation was looking into the library through the secret openings. She saw a veiled form enter the library. The clerk removed the veil, and the queen uttered a cry of fright. It was Oliva, dressed in one of the favorite costumes of Marie Antoinette. It was Marie Antoinette herself, less

the blood of the Cæsars. The queen thought she was looking at herself in a mirror; she gazed eagerly at the apparition.

"What says your Majesty to this resemblance?" said Monsieur de Crosne, triumphant at the effect he had produced.

"I say — I say — Monsieur —" stammered the queen, bewildered. "Ah, Olivier," she thought, "why are you not here?"

"What does your Majesty desire?"

"Nothing, Monsieur, nothing except that the king should be informed —"

"And that Monsieur de Provence should see this woman, — is not that your wish, Madame?"

"Oh, thanks, Monsieur de Crosne, thanks! But what will be done with this woman?"

"Is it really to this woman that everything which has been done is to be attributed?" asked Monsieur de Crosne.

"You have, doubtless, obtained a clew to the conspiracy?"

"Very nearly so, Madame."

"And Monsieur de Rohan?"

"Monsieur de Rohan knows nothing of this at present."

"Oh," said the queen, hiding her face in her hands, "that woman yonder, Monsieur, is — I see it now — the whole cause of the cardinal's error!"

"That may be, Madame; but if there was error on the cardinal's part, there was crime on the part of some other person!"

"Make a thorough investigation, Monsieur; you have in your hands the honor of the house of France."

"And be assured, Madame, that it is in good hands," replied Monsieur de Crosne.

"And the prosecution?"

"Is going on. Everything is denied; but I shall at

the proper time bring forward that piece of convincing testimony which you have in your library."

"And Madame de La Motte?"

"She does not know that I have found this girl. She accuses Monsieur de Cagliostro of having deceived the cardinal almost to the point of destroying his reason."

"And Monsieur de Cagliostro?"

"Monsieur de Cagliostro, who has been questioned, has promised to come to see me this morning."

"He is a dangerous man."

"He will be a useful man. Stung by a viper like Madame de La Motte, he will absorb the venom, and furnish us with a counter-poison."

"You hope for revelations from him?"

"I am sure to have them."

"Why do you think so, Monsieur? Oh, tell me all that can reassure me."

"These are my reasons, Madame: Madame de La Motte lived in the Rue Saint Claude —"

"I know that!" said the queen, blushing.

"Yes; your Majesty did that woman the honor of being charitable to her."

"Has she not repaid me well? Well, she lived in the Rue Saint Claude."

"And Monsieur de Cagliostro lived exactly opposite."

"And you suppose —"

"That the secret of either one of these two neighbors would be known to the other. But pardon, Madame, it is nearly time for me to meet Monsieur de Cagliostro in Paris; and I would not for the world delay receiving his explanations."

"Go, Monsieur, go; and let me again assure you of my gratitude."

"This," she cried, weeping bitterly, when Monsieur de

Crosne had left the room, "is the beginning of my justification. I shall read my triumph on every face, but that of the only friend to whom I wish to prove my innocence, that one I shall not see!"

In the mean time Monsieur de Crosne was hastening to Paris, to his own house where Monsieur de Cagliostro was waiting for him. The latter knew all that had happened. On the day before, he was on his way to Beausire's house to urge him to leave France, when on the road he saw him sitting in the carriage between the two officers. Oliva was hidden on the back seat.

Beausire saw the count, recognized him, and immediately the idea occurred to him that this mysterious and powerful nobleman might be of use to him. He reminded the agents of the proposal they had made to allow him to escape; they accepted the one hundred louis which he offered them, and let him go notwithstanding Oliva's tears. Beausire whispered in the ear of his mistress, "Hope; I am going to do something to save you." And he ran off in the direction that Cagliostro had taken. The latter had no need to seek further for Beausire, since Beausire was returning to Paris. It would be expedient, however, to wait for Beausire, if by chance the latter should send after him. Cagliostro therefore waited at a turn in the road for about half an hour, when he saw the unhappy lover of Oliva approaching, pale and out of breath. Beausire, on seeing that the count's carriage had stopped, uttered a cry of joy.

"What is the matter, my boy?" said the count, helping him to a seat beside him.

Beausire related his lamentable story, to which Cagliostro listened in silence.

"She is lost!" said the count.

"How can that be?" cried Beausire.

Cagliostro then related to him what he did not know before, — the intrigue of the Rue Saint Claude and that of Versailles.

Beausire almost fainted. "Save her! save her!" he said, falling upon his knees in the carriage, "and I will give her to you if you love her still."

"My friend," replied Cagliostro, "you are in error; I never loved Mademoiselle Oliva; my only object was to take her from that life of debauchery which you made her share."

"But —" said Beausire, surprised.

"That astonishes you? Know then that I am one of the directors of a moral reform society, whose aim is to snatch from vice all who offer any chance of cure. I took Oliva away from you to cure her. Ask her if she has ever heard from my lips a word of gallantry; ask her if my services in her behalf have not always been disinterested!"

"All the more reason, Monsieur; save her! save her!"

"I will try; but this will depend on you, Beausire."

"Ask of me my life."

"I will not ask so much as that. Return to Paris with me, and if you will follow my instructions to the letter, perhaps we can save your mistress; this on one condition only."

"What is that, Monsieur?"

"I will tell you on our way back to Paris."

"Oh, I consent to it in advance; oh, to see her again! to see her again!"

"That is just what I intend; in less than two hours you shall see her again."

"And I shall embrace her?"

"I think so; and you will also tell her what I am about to say to you."

Cagliostro went back to Paris with Beausire. In two hours, — it was evening, — he had overtaken the chaise ; and in another hour Beausire was purchasing of the two police agents, for fifty louis, the privilege of embracing Nicole, and of whispering to her the instructions of the count. The officers were charmed with this passionate love. They calculated on receiving fifty louis at least at every second relay. But Beausire did not appear again ; the chaise of Cagliostro was rapidly bearing him to Paris, where so many important events were about to happen. So much it was necessary to inform the reader before exhibiting Monsieur Cagliostro talking business with Monsieur de Crosne. Now we may introduce him to the cabinet of the lieutenant of police.

CHAPTER L.

CAGLIOSTRO'S REVELATIONS.

MONSIEUR DE CROSNE knew as much about Cagliostro as a skilful lieutenant of police can know of a man living in France; he looked upon him as a mountebank of noble rank.

This Monsieur de Crosne was a man of strong mind, acquainted with all the resources of his office, well received at court, indifferent to favor, never compounding with his pride, — a man not easily influenced. Cagliostro could not have offered to him, as to Monsieur de Rohan, louis still hot from his furnace; Cagliostro could not have presented to him, as Balsamo had done to Monsieur de Sartines, the muzzle of a pistol. From him Balsamo had not a Lorenza to demand, but to him Cagliostro must give an account of himself. This was the reason why, instead of waiting to be summoned, he had demanded an audience of the magistrate. Monsieur de Crosne felt the advantage of his position, and was prepared to use it. Cagliostro felt the awkwardness of his own, and was trying to get out of it.

Monsieur de Crosne expected from Cagliostro revelations with regard to the necklace and the practices of Madame de La Motte. In that he was at a disadvantage. He had, however, the right to question and imprison; in this lay his superiority. He received the count like a man who feels his importance, but who does not wish to be wanting in politeness, not even to a charlatan.

"Monsieur," said the lieutenant of police, "you have asked an audience of me; I have come from Versailles expressly to grant it."

"Monsieur, I thought you might have some interest in questioning me about matters that are taking place; and as a man who knows your merit and the importance of your functions, I have come to you."

"Question you?" said the magistrate, affecting surprise; "but about what, Monsieur; and in what capacity?"

"Monsieur," replied Cagliostro, frankly, "your attention has been much occupied with Madame de La Motte and the disappearance of the necklace."

"Can it be that you have found it?" asked Monsieur de Crosne, in an almost bantering tone.

"No," said the count, gravely. "But if I have not found the necklace, I at least know that Madame de La Motte lived in the Rue Saint Claude."

"In the house opposite yours, Monsieur; I know it also," said the magistrate.

"Then, Monsieur, you know what Madame de La Motte has been doing— Let us say no more about it."

"On the contrary," said Monsieur de Crosne, with an indifferent air, "let us talk about it."

"Oh, there was nothing of importance in that, except in regard to little Oliva," said Cagliostro; "but since you know all about Madame de La Motte, I have nothing new to tell you."

At the name of Oliva, Monsieur de Crosne started. "What did you say of Oliva?" he asked. "Who is this Oliva?"

"You do not know? Ah, Monsieur, that is a curious thing, about which I am surprised that I have to inform

you. Imagine to yourself a very pretty girl, blue eyes, and face of the most perfect oval, — you see, a sort of beauty which reminds one of her Majesty the queen.”

“Ah, ah !” said Monsieur de Crosne. “Well ?”

“Well, this girl was living a bad life which it gave me pain to see ; she was formerly in the service of an old friend of mine, Monsieur de Taverny —”

“The baron who died the other day.”

“Precisely, yes ; the one who is dead. She had, besides, been in the service of a man of science, whom you do not know, Monsieur le Lieutenant of Police, and who — But I am repeating, and I see that I am wearying you.”

“Monsieur, please go on, I beg. This Oliva, you were saying —”

“Was leading a bad life, as I have had the honor of telling you, with her lover, one of your most ordinary rascals, whom probably you do not know —”

“A certain Beausire, perhaps ?” said the magistrate, happy to appear well-informed.

“Ah, you know him ; that is surprising,” said Cagliostro, with admiration. “Well, one day when this Beausire had beaten her, and robbed her of more than was usual, she came to me for protection, and I good-naturedly allowed her to occupy some corner in one of my hôtels —”

“She was living in your house ?” cried the magistrate, surprised. “Oh, that was the reason my agents could not find her.”

“What ! was this little girl sought for ? Has she committed some crime of which I am ignorant ?”

“No, Monsieur, no ; go on, I entreat you.”

“Oh, I have finished. I lodged her at my house, — that is all.”

"No, no, no! Monsieur le Comte, that is not all, since you seemed just now to associate Oliva's name with that of Madame de La Motte."

"Ah, on account of their being neighbors," said Cagliostro.

"You interest me very much, Monsieur, — more than you can imagine; for this Oliva whom you claim to have lodged in your house, I found in the country."

"You found her?"

"With Monsieur de Beausire —"

"Well, now, I suspected that," cried Cagliostro. "She was with Beausire? Ah, very well, very well! Amends must be made to Madame de La Motte."

"What! — what do you mean?" replied Monsieur de Crosne.

"I say, Monsieur, that having for a moment suspected Madame de La Motte, I will make her full and complete reparation."

"Suspected her? — of what?"

"Good God! can you listen patiently to all this gossip? Well, then, I will tell you that just when I believed this Oliva to be reclaimed, some one carried her away from me."

"Carried her away? — from your house?"

"From my house."

"That is strange!"

"And I could have sworn that it was Madame de La Motte."

Monsieur de Crosne drew near to Cagliostro, and said, "Come, tell me this exactly, if you please!"

"Oh, Monsieur, now that you have found Oliva with Beausire, nothing can induce me to think of Madame de La Motte, her attentions, or her correspondence."

"Were Madame de la Motte and Oliva acquainted?"

"Intimately; and Madame de La Motte found a way to take Oliva out with her every night."

"Every night! Are you sure of that?"

"As sure as a man can be of anything he has seen or heard."

"Oh, Monsieur, you are telling me things for which I would pay at the rate of a thousand francs a word! Are you the friend of Monsieur de Rohan?"

"I believe so."

"Then you must know how much that element of intrigue, called Madame de La Motte, enters into his scandalous affair. Or perhaps you know the consequences of those promenades of Oliva and Madame de La Motte?"

"Monsieur, there are things of which the prudent man should always be ignorant," replied Cagliostro, sententiously.

"Have you proofs that Madame de La Motte had corresponded with Oliva?"

"A hundred."

"What are they?"

"Notes from Madame de La Motte which she shot into Oliva's room with a cross-bow. Some of these notes, rolled round pieces of lead, fell into the street; my servants and myself picked up several."

"Monsieur, would you deliver them up to the officers of the law?"

"Oh, Monsieur, they are of so innocent a nature that I should have no scruples in doing so."

"And the proofs of their connivance, of their meetings?"

"A thousand."

"I ask for only one."

"The strongest. It appears that Madame de La Motte had obtained the means of entering my house to see Oliva;

for I saw her there myself the very day when the young woman disappeared."

"Ah! and why did she go, since Oliva had disappeared?"

"I could not understand that at first myself. I had seen Madame de La Motte alight from a post-chaise which was waiting in the Rue du Roi-Doré. My servants had seen the carriage standing there for a long time, and I supposed that Madame de La Motte wished to attach Oliva to herself."

"And you allowed her to do it?"

"Why not? Madame de La Motte is a charitable lady; she is received at court."

"Mademoiselle Oliva was living in your house?" said Monsieur de Crosne, meditating profoundly; "and Mademoiselle Oliva and Madame de La Motte were acquainted, visited each other, went out together?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Ah, Madame de La Motte was seen in your house the day that Oliva was carried off?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And you thought that the countess wished to attach this girl to herself?"

"What else could I think?"

"What did Madame de La Motte say when she did not find Oliva at your house?"

"She seemed to be confused."

"Do you think Beausire carried her off?"

"I think so only because you told me that he did carry her off; otherwise, I should suspect nothing. Who could have told the man where Oliva was?"

"Oliva herself."

"I do not think so, for she might have gone to him without sending for him to take her away; and he could

not have got into the house if Madame de La Motte had not sent him a key."

"She had a key?"

"That cannot be doubted."

"On what day was she carried off?" said Monsieur de Crosne.

"Oh, Monsieur, in regard to that I cannot be mistaken; it was the night before Saint Louis' Day."

"That is it!" cried the lieutenant of police, — "that is it! Monsieur, you have just rendered a signal service to the State. Can I rely on your delivering up these proofs of which you speak?"

"I am ready, Monsieur, to submit to the demands of justice in all things."

"Well, Monsieur, I shall remind you of your promise. I hope to have the honor of seeing you again," and he dismissed Cagliostro, who said to himself as he was retiring, —

"Ah, Countess, viper! you wished to accuse me! I think that you have bitten on a file; look out for your teeth!"

CHAPTER LI.

EXAMINATIONS.

WHILE Monsieur de Crosne was holding his interview with Cagliostro, Monsieur de Breteuil presented himself at the Bastille to interrogate Monsieur de Rohan, on behalf of the king. Monsieur de Rohan refused to reply ; and when the baron insisted, he said that the matter now was in the hands of the parliament and the judges, and he would leave it there.

Monsieur de Breteuil, withdrawing from this attempt without having obtained any satisfaction, sought and obtained an interview with Madame de La Motte. He explained to her, briefly, the dangers of her situation. She replied that she had proofs of her innocence which she would furnish on the proper occasion ; that she would answer nothing except in presence of the cardinal, and after she should be informed what charges he allowed to weigh against her.

Monsieur de Breteuil then told her that the cardinal held her responsible for everything.

"Everything?" said Jeanne, — "even the theft?"

"Even the theft."

"Please say to Monsieur le Cardinal," said Jeanne, coolly, "that I advise him not to persist in so bad a method of defence."

Monsieur de Breteuil was not satisfied. He promised everything to Madame de La Motte if she would clearly accuse some one. "Take care!" he said; "in saying

nothing, you accuse the queen. If you persist in that you will be found guilty of treason. That means disgrace, — perhaps the halter."

"I do not accuse the queen," Jeanne replied; "but why do they accuse me?"

"Accuse some one!" insisted Breteuil; "it is your only way to save yourself."

But Jeanne kept silent; and that first interview between her and the keeper of the seals was without result.

Meantime the rumor got abroad that proofs had come to light; that the diamonds had been sold in England; and that Monsieur de Villette had been arrested there.

The first assault which Jeanne had to sustain was of an alarming character. Confronted with Reteau, whom she believed to be her ally unto death, she with terror heard him humbly acknowledge that he was a forger; that he had forged both the jeweller's receipt and the queen's letter. Being asked with what motives he had committed these crimes, he replied that he had been instigated to them by Madame de La Motte.

Jeanne furiously denied Reteau's testimony. She declared that she had never seen him. Then she received two severe shocks; she was crushed by the evidence of two witnesses. One of these was the driver of the carriage in which she had made her nocturnal expedition on the night and at the hour stated by Reteau; and the other was one of Cagliostro's servants, who affirmed that on a certain evening he had seen Monsieur Reteau de Villette seated in a post-chaise, from which Madame de La Motte had just alighted.

Thereupon Jeanne violently attacked Cagliostro, who, she declared, had worked upon the Cardinal de Rohan's mind with his incantations and sorceries, and had thus

inspired him with *culpable ideas against the royal Majesty*.

That was the first link in the accusation of adultery.

Monsieur de Rohan defended himself and Cagliostro at the same time. He was so obstinate in his denial that Jeanne, in desperation, at length openly charged the cardinal with a mad passion for the queen.

Cagliostro demanded that he too should be imprisoned, that he might prove his innocence to all the world. His request was granted.

Accusers and judges became more interested,—as always happens on the first appearance of truth,—and public opinion immediately ranged itself with the cardinal and Cagliostro against the queen.

The unfortunate princess, to make clear her determination to prosecute the suit, secured the publication of the reports made to the king in regard to her nocturnal walks, and summoned Monsieur de Crosne to tell all he knew.

This blow, skilfully calculated, fell upon Jeanne with crushing force. She denied that there had been any nocturnal walks by her connivance, or to her knowledge. She declared false the certified reports that she had been seen in the park in company with the queen or with the cardinal.

At this stage in the proceedings, when Jeanne was loudly protesting that she had never been in the Versailles park at night, and that she had never been cognizant of any private relation between the queen and the cardinal,—at that moment Oliva appeared, a living witness who changed public opinion and destroyed the edifice of lies erected by the countess.

Oliva's appearance was a terrible blow to the cardinal. He perceived at last that he had been tricked in the most infamous manner. That man, full of delicacy and noble

passion, had been betrayed by an adventuress and a woman of the town into an attack on the queen,—a woman whom he loved, and who was altogether innocent ! When he saw Oliva, that queen of the cross-roads, and recalled the rose, the clasped hands, the Baths of Apollo, he turned pale, and would have poured out his blood at the feet of Marie Antoinette had he seen her at that moment.

But the cardinal could not admit Oliva's identity without acknowledging that he was in love with the actual queen. The avowal of his error would be an accusation, a stain. He therefore remained silent, and allowed Jeanne to deny everything.

Efforts being renewed to induce Jeanne to give some explanation, she coolly replied, "The best way of proving that the queen did not walk by night in the park is to exhibit a woman who resembles the queen, and who pretends that she was in the park. You exhibit her ; it is very fine."

This infamous insinuation met with success, and once more hid the truth. But when Oliva, with innocent anxiety, gave all the details and all the proofs, omitting nothing, she obtained a more ready belief than had the countess.

Jeanne then resorted to a desperate expedient,—she confessed that she had conducted the cardinal to Versailles ; she declared that he had insisted on seeing the queen that he might give her assurance of his respectful devotion. She declared further that those walks in the park were taken with the knowledge of the queen, who, concealed in the shrubbery, listened with stifled laughter to the passionate words of the amorous Monsieur de Rohan.

The queen was helpless against this last accusation, for she could not prove it to be false ; because Jeanne,

driven to extremities, declared that she would publish all the love-letters written to the queen by the cardinal, and because in fact she had those letters, burning with mad passion. And Mademoiselle Oliva could not prove that any one was, or was not, listening behind the shrubbery. In short there were too many persons interested in taking these lies for positive truths. The queen was helpless.

CHAPTER LII.

THE LAST HOPE LOST.

AFTER examinations without number, in which the cardinal had maintained his calm and courteous demeanor even toward Jeanne, and Jeanne had conducted herself boisterously, the opinion of the public, and of the judges especially, became at last fixed.

No new incidents could be adduced ; revelations were exhausted. Jeanne perceived that she had produced no favorable effect on the minds of her judges. She therefore, in the retirement of her prison-cell, once more examined her resources.

By all those who were in the train of Monsieur de Breteuil, Jeanne was urged to spare the queen, but to accuse the cardinal without mercy. From those who were connected with the cardinal — a powerful family, judges favoring the cause of the people, the clergy fruitful in resources — came the advice to tell all the truth, to unmask the intrigues of the court, and to stimulate the commotion to such a point that all crowned heads should take alarm.

This party seemed sure of victory. The popular enthusiasm was in favor of the cardinal. Men admired his patience, and women his discretion. Men were angry that he should have been so basely deceived ; women were slow to believe that he had been deceived. To very many Oliva had no real existence, or if she

existed she had been invented by the queen for the occasion.

Jeanne thought it all over. Her lawyers abandoned her; the judges made no secret of their aversion; the Rohan party vigorously assailed her; in public opinion she was scorned. She resolved on a last blow, which should make the judges anxious, frighten the cardinal's friends, and arouse anew the popular feeling against the queen. Her plan was to make it appear that she had been anxious throughout to shield the queen, but that she must reveal everything if driven too hard; that as to the cardinal, she had only imitated his reserve, but that if he should speak out, she would follow his example, and they would prove their innocence.

In pursuance of this plan Jeanne wrote the following letter to the queen:—

MADAME, — Notwithstanding all that is painful in my position, I have not complained. All the expedients employed to extort a confession from me have only strengthened my resolution not to *compromise* my sovereign.

Nevertheless, though persuaded that my *constancy* and my *discretion* entitle me to relief from my present embarrassment, I confess that the efforts made by the cardinal's family make me fear that I shall become their victim.

A long imprisonment, endless examinations, disgrace, and despair at finding myself accused of a crime of which I am innocent have enfeebled my courage, and I fear that my constancy will yield to so many blows dealt at the same time.

By a single word Madame can put an end to this miserable affair, through the mediation of Monsieur de Breteuil, who can give to it, in the eyes of the *minister* (the king), the appearance which his intelligence will suggest to him, without *compromising Madame in any way*. It is the fear of being compelled to reveal all which necessitates the step I am now taking; and I am persuaded that Madame will consider the motives which

have urged me to it, and that she will give orders for delivering me from my painful situation.

I am, with profound respect, Madame's very humble and obedient servant, —

COMTESSE DE VALOIS DE LA MOTTE.

Either this letter would be delivered to the queen, and would alarm her to such a degree that she would conclude to end the struggle by setting Jeanne at liberty, or — which was more probable — it would be delivered to the governor of the prison, and by him to the judges. Jeanne had, in short, so expressed herself that the letter, fall where it might, would deposit a leaven of hatred, distrust, and irreverence toward the queen.

Jeanne wrote at the same time a letter to the cardinal, as follows : —

MONSIEUR, — I cannot conceive why you so obstinately persist in silence. It seems to me that you should place unreserved confidence in our judges ; our condition would be the better for it. As to myself, I am resolved to remain silent until you will support my word. But why do you not speak ? Explain all the circumstances of this mysterious affair, and I swear that I will confirm all that you say. Consider, Monsieur le Cardinal, that if I speak first, and you disavow what I say, I am lost. I shall not escape *her* vengeance who wishes to sacrifice us both.

But you have nothing like that to fear from me ; you know my devotion. If *she* proves to be implacable, your cause will always be my own ; I would sacrifice everything to shield you from *her* hatred.

P. S. I have written to *her* a letter which will, I hope, persuade her, if not to speak the truth, at least not to crush us, — who have no crime with which to reproach ourselves, except our error, or our silence.

This artful letter was delivered to the cardinal during their last examination in the great parlor of the Bastille. It was observed that the cardinal turned red, and then

pale, shuddering at such audacity. He went out to recover his breath.

At the same time the countess handed the letter which she had written to the queen to the Abbé Lekel almoner of the Bastille, who had accompanied the cardinal to the parlor and was devoted to his interests.

The almoner refused to take the letter.

"Well, then," said Jeanne, resorting to intimidation, "say to the cardinal that I have still one recourse left, — that of publishing the letters which he wrote to the queen. I shall be sorry to do so, but for our common advantage I will do it."

The almoner still refused.

"Take notice," said Jeanne, "that you reduce me to the necessity of making use of Monsieur de Rohan's letters."

"Very well," replied the abbé, "make use of them, Madame."

"But," replied Jeanne, trembling with anger, "these proofs of a secret correspondence with her Majesty will cause the cardinal's head to fall on the scaffold!"

At that moment the door was opened, and the cardinal, superb in his wrath, appeared on the threshold. "You may cause the head of a Rohan to fall on the scaffold, Madame," he said; "it will not be the first time the Bastille has witnessed that spectacle. But if that is to be, I declare to you that I shall not reproach the scaffold on which my head shall roll, provided I may see that on which you will be branded as a thief and a forger. Come, Abbé, come!"

The cardinal turned his back to Jeanne, and going out with the almoner, left to the companionship of rage and despair that miserable creature who could make no movement without sinking deeper into that deadly slough in which she was soon to be covered out of sight.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE BAPTISM OF LITTLE BEAUSIRE.

MADAME DE LA MOTTE had failed in all her calculations ; Cagliostro had failed in none of his. On his imprisonment he perceived that he had at last a pretext for open war on that monarchy which for so many years he had sought to undermine. He then got ready the material for that famous letter from London which appeared about a month later, and was the first blow on the walls of the old Bastille, the first hostile act of the Revolution, the first shock preceding that of July 14, 1789.

In that letter Cagliostro said : " I am asked if I shall ever return to France. Assuredly I shall — *when the Bastille shall have become a public promenade.* God speed the day ! "

Oliva meanwhile allowed not a word to escape her lips which might compromise her protector. What she said was injurious to Madame de La Motte alone ; she openly and clearly set forth her innocent participation in a hoax intended, she said, for a gentleman whose name was Louis.

While the captives were in prison Oliva had not seen her dear Beausire ; but she had not been altogether abandoned by him, as will be seen. She had the memorial of her lover for which Dido longed when she said, " Ah, if I might only have a little Ascanius playing on my knees ! "

In the month of May, 1786, a man was waiting on the steps of the porch of Saint Paul's Church. He appeared to be agitated, and was looking steadily toward the Bastille. One of Cagliostro's German servants came and stood beside him. This man tried to check Beausire's wild impatience, saying to him, in a low tone, "Wait, wait; they will come."

"Ah," said Beausire, "it is you!"

As Beausire, still not satisfied with "They will come," continued to gesticulate beyond all reason, the German whispered to him, "You will attract the police. My master promised you news; I am here to give it to you."

"Give it! give it, my friend!"

"Lower. The mother and child are doing well."

"Oh! oh!" cried Beausire, in an indescribable transport of joy. "She is delivered! She is safe!"

"Yes, Monsieur; but I beg you, let us go aside."

"Is it a girl?"

"No, Monsieur, a boy."

"So much the better. Oh, my friend, how happy I am! how happy I am! My hearty thanks to your master. Tell him that my life, — all that I have is his. But why did you say, 'They will come'? Who will come?"

"The physician of the Bastille and the nurse."

"They are coming here? — and for what?"

"To have the child baptized."

"I am to see my child!" cried Beausire, jumping about. "Do you say that I shall see Oliva's son? — here, immediately?"

"Here, immediately; but be calm, I beg! Patience!"

Beausire drew nearer to the German. "Is she comfortable?" he asked, clasping his hands.

"Very comfortable," replied the other. "Oh, here is a carriage coming!"

"Yes, yes!"

"It stops —"

"There is something white — lace —"

"The child's mantle."

"My God!" and Beausire was obliged to support himself against one of the pillars as he saw alighting from the carriage the nurse, the physician, and one of the Bastille turnkeys. After they had entered, Beausire followed them. The priest, recognizing the nurse and the physician, who had come to him on several occasions like this, greeted them with a bow and a smile. Beausire bowed and smiled with the priest.

The door of the sacristy was then closed, and the priest began to write the words of registration. When he asked the name of the child, the physician said, "It is a boy, and that is all I know about it."

Four bursts of laughter accented these words, which seemed to Beausire not very respectful.

"He must have some kind of a name, if only the name of a saint," said the priest.

"Yes; the young lady wishes him to be called Toussaint."

"There they are then, all of them," replied the priest, with an hilarious burst of laughter at his pun.

Beausire began to lose patience, but the German restrained him.

"Well," said the priest, "with such a name as that, with all the saints for his patrons, we can get along without a father. Let us write: To-day is presented a male child, born yesterday at the Bastille, son of Nicole Oliva Legay and — father unknown."

Beausire darted to the priest's side, and seizing him by

the wrist, cried out, "Toussaint has a father as well as a mother; he has a tender father, who will not deny his own offspring. Write, I pray you, that Toussaint, born yesterday of Mademoiselle Nicole Oliva Legay, is the son of Jean Baptiste Toussaint de Beausire, here present!"

The astonishment caused by these words may readily be conceived. The pen fell from the hands of the priest, and the child almost fell from the arms of the nurse. Beausire received it in his own, covered it with eager kisses, and dropped on its brow the baptism of paternal tears.

The spectators, accustomed though they were to dramatic scenes, were much affected, — except the priest, who maintained his composure, and even expressed doubts as to the statements made by Beausire. Beausire placed on the font three louis d'or, which were more effective than his tears in establishing his good faith and the fact of his paternity. The priest bowed, and pocketed the money, and requested Beausire to write in the registry his declaration that he was the child's father.

"I!" cried Beausire, "why, I would write it with my blood!" and he seized the pen with joyous eagerness.

"Take care!" said the turnkey Guyon; "it is dangerous to write in public registers!"

"Thanks for your advice, friend!" said Beausire, proudly; "but to deny the son of my wife —"

"Your wife?" cried the physician.

"Legitimate?" cried the priest.

"May God restore her to liberty," said Beausire, trembling with joy, "and the next day Nicole Legay will take the name of De Beausire."

"Meantime you are running a risk!" said Guyon. "I think they are looking for you."

All agreed, however, not to betray him.

Beausire wrote his declaration in verbose and magniloquent terms, as if narrating an exploit of which he was proud. Then, having read anew the completed certificate, he embraced his son, slipped ten louis under his mantle, suspended from his neck a ring designed for the mother, and proud as Xenophon on his retreat, he opened the door of the sacristy, and marched forth without any precaution of concealment.

The witnesses of the baptism also withdrew and regained their carriage, still astonished by the adventure. Beausire stood looking after them, sent several kisses to his son, and when the carriage had disappeared, retreated to an asylum known only to himself, Cagliostro, and Monsieur de Crosne, — that is to say, Monsieur de Crosne fulfilled a promise he had made to Cagliostro, and left Beausire undisturbed.

When the child was taken back to the Bastille, and the nurse had informed Oliva of these surprising adventures, the latter, putting Beausire's ring on her thickest finger, began to weep, and said, "I will at least be a good mother!"

CHAPTER LIV.

THE STOOL OF INTERROGATION.

THE day at last arrived when the judgment of the court of parliament was to be invoked by the concluding speech of the *procureur-general*.

The bearing of the accused was as before : Oliva was frank and timid ; Cagliostro, calm and superior ; Villette, downcast and in tears ; Jeanne, insolent, threatening, and venomous ; the cardinal, unaffected, meditative, absent-minded.

In the public mind the question still was, which of the two accused persons had stolen the necklace ? This question involved another : Had the queen just reason for her accusation of the cardinal ? and this was, politically, a question of importance. Had Monsieur de Rohan believed that he had the right to speak to the queen as he had spoken to her ; to act in her name as he had acted ? Had he been, in fact, a secret agent of Marie Antoinette, — an agent repudiated as soon as the affair made a noise ?

In a word, had the cardinal acted in good faith, as a confidant of the queen ? If he had acted in good faith, the queen must have been implicated in those intimacies which she had denied, and which Madame de La Motte had insinuated to have existed.

The *procureur-general* began his speech. He was the organ of the court, and spoke in the name of outraged royal dignity. He demanded that Villette should be condemned to the galleys ; that Jeanne de La Motte should

be branded, scourged, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment; that Cagliostro and Oliva should be dismissed from the case; and that the cardinal should be compelled to acknowledge himself guilty of language offensive to royal Majesty, and then should be banished from the presence of the king and queen, and deprived of his offices and dignities.

This demand divided the parliament, and terrified the accused. The royal will had been so strongly expressed that had the demand been uttered twenty-five years earlier, though then already parliament had begun to vindicate its prerogative, the idea of the infallibility of the throne would have prevailed. But fourteen counsellors, only, adopted in full the conclusions of the *procureur-general*, and there was a division in the assembly.

The last examination of the accused was then entered upon, — a formality almost useless under existing circumstances. The custom was that the accused should appear before the judges on a small wooden seat, dishonored by the contact of those who had passed from it to the scaffold. The forger Villette occupied it first, who begged for pardon with prayers and tears. No one took any interest in him; he was, and appeared to be, only a rascal of the common sort. Dismissed by the court, he went weeping to his prison-cell.

Then came Madame de La Motte, who made a strong impression on the assembly. She had been already exposed to the first of the insults to which she was to be subjected; she had been compelled to ascend by the small stairway, like a common criminal. The heat and noise and general movement troubled her at first, and her eyes were unsteady. Then the officer who had her in charge led her quickly to the stool placed at the centre of the half-circle, which bore some resemblance to the block on a

scaffold. On seeing that she was expected to occupy that degrading seat, Jeanne de La Motte, who proudly called herself Valois, and as she thought controlled the fortunes of a queen of France, turned pale, and cast angry glances about her, as if to intimidate the judges who would permit that outrage. Seeing however no indication of sympathy on the faces around her, she placed herself, almost fainting, on the stool of interrogation.

In the examination that followed, Jeanne still pursued her method of vague insinuation against the queen. Of her own innocence she spoke more decidedly ; and she managed to draw from the examining judge an inquiry as to the letters which were said to have been interchanged between the queen and the cardinal.

Jeanne, in reply, declared that she was unwilling to say anything which might compromise the queen, and that no one could answer on that subject better than the cardinal himself. "Ask him," she said, "to produce those letters, or copies of them ; read them, and satisfy your curiosity. As to myself, I cannot affirm whether those letters were written by the queen and by the cardinal. They seem to me, on the one hand, too free and familiar to have been written by a sovereign to a subject, and on the other hand too irreverent to have been written by a subject to a queen."

The deep, significant silence which followed this attack might have warned Jeanne that she had succeeded only in arousing horror in the minds of her enemies, terror in the minds of her partisans, and incredulity in the minds of her impartial judges. She left the stool of interrogation with the pleasing hope that the cardinal too must sit on it. That revenge would almost have satisfied her. But on turning back for a last look at the degrading seat which she was forcing a Rohan to occupy, she saw that it had

been removed and that an arm-chair stood in its place. She uttered a cry of rage, and hastened from the hall in frenzied excitement.

The cardinal arrived in his carriage, attended by the governor of the Bastille. On his entrance he was greeted by a murmur of respect and sympathy. He was pale, and somewhat agitated. He manifested in his demeanor that respect and condescension due to judges from an accused person who accepts and invokes their jurisdiction. When he began to speak, his trembling utterance, broken by sighs, and his humble bearing moved his audience to sympathy. He spoke slowly, offered excuses rather than proofs, supplications rather than arguments, and at length stopping short, — he the man of eloquent speech! — by that paralysis of mind and courage produced more effect than all the advocates with all their arguments had produced.

After the cardinal, came Oliva. The most ardent haters of the monarchy were shocked on seeing the living copy of Marie Antoinette queen of France sitting on the stool of thieves and forgers.

Then came Cagliostro, the least guilty of all. He was not asked to sit, though the arm-chair remained by the side of the stool. The court feared to question him, and he was speedily dismissed.

The court then announced that the trial was at an end, and their deliberations would begin immediately. The crowd slowly withdrew along the streets and the quays, intending to return soon to hear the judgment, which all agreed could not be long delayed.

CHAPTER LV.

A WAY OF ESCAPE.

WHILE the cardinal, on the terraces of the Bastille, discussed with Cagliostro the probable result of their defence; while Oliva, in her cell, caressed her child; and Reteau, in his, thought of the crowns promised by Monsieur de Crosne, — Jeanne, having retired to the room of the keeper's wife, Madame Hubert, endeavored to soothe her agitation by noise and action.

This room, high and large like a hall, was lighted by a large window looking toward the quay and covered by an iron grating. Here Madame de La Motte spent the days of her imprisonment in company with Madame Hubert, her son, and her husband. She had won their sympathy; she had managed to persuade them that the queen was very guilty. A day was to come when in that same hall another keeper, pitying the misfortunes of another prisoner, would believe her innocent because so gentle and so kind, — and that prisoner would be the queen.

Madame de La Motte, then, was proposing to forget, in the society of her friends, the troubles which assailed her, and repay them by her gay humor for the kindness they had shown her. But she found them anxious and embarrassed. Alarmed by this she sought to elicit an explanation from Madame Hubert; but she and those with her were noncommittal.

Jeanne perceived, in a corner by the fireplace, an abbé who was an occasional guest of the house. He had been secretary of the preceptor of Monsieur le Comte de Provence. He was a man of simple manners, though somewhat cynical. After a long-continued absence from Madame Hubert's house, he had become a frequent visitor there since the arrival of Madame de La Motte.

"I am sure," said Jeanne, "that they are talking more freely up yonder than we are talking here."

These words were greeted with a feeble murmur of assent.

"Up yonder?" said the abbé, feigning ignorance, "where, Madame la Comtesse?"

"In the hall where my judges are in consultation."

"Oh, yes, yes," said the abbé. And again there was silence.

"I think," Jeanne resumed, "that my course to-day produced a good effect. Do you not think it did?"

"Why, yes, Madame," timidly replied the keeper; and he rose as if to go out.

"What is your opinion?" asked Jeanne, turning to the abbé. "Does not the affair look well for me? They have brought forward no evidence."

"It is true, Madame," said the abbé, "you have much to hope; and yet suppose that the king —"

"Well, the king; what will he do?"

"Eh, Madame! the king cannot consent to be found in the wrong."

"He must then have Monsieur de Rohan condemned, and that is impossible."

"That indeed is improbable."

"But in this cause," Jeanne hastened to say, "the cardinal and I are in the same situation."

"Not at all," replied the abbé; "you are mistaken,

Madame. One of the accused will be absolved, — but only one. A culprit is necessary to the king; otherwise what will become of the queen?"

"It is true," said Jeanne, in a dull tone. "The king needs a culprit; well, Monsieur de Rohan will serve the purpose as well as I."

A silence ensued, alarming to the countess. The abbé was the first to speak. "Madame," he said, "the king does not bear malice, and when his first anger is satisfied he will forget all that has happened."

"But what do you call a satisfied anger?" asked Jeanne, ironically.

"A condemnation — any — would be a satisfaction."

"Any, Monsieur!" cried Jeanne, "that is a fearful word. Any! why that means every!"

"Oh, I speak only of seclusion in a convent," replied the abbé, coldly. "That is the idea, according to rumor, which the king is likely to adopt in reference to you."

Jeanne looked at him with terror, which soon gave place to furious excitement.

"Seclusion in a convent!" she exclaimed. "That is to say, a lingering death which shall appear to be an act of clemency! Tortures of hunger, of cold, of penances! No; enough of punishment, enough of shame, enough of suffering for the innocent, while the guilty one is powerful, free, honored! Death, rather, at once; but the death I choose to punish myself with for having been born into this infamous world!"

Uttering these words Jeanne rushed to the sideboard to seize a knife. The keeper, Madame Hubert, and the abbé threw themselves upon her, and prevented her reaching it. She then, with cries too violent to be natural, rushed into an adjoining cabinet, seized an enormous porcelain vase,

and struck her head with it repeatedly. The vase was shattered, and Jeanne's face was covered with blood. They got her into a chair, and bathed her with perfumed waters and vinegar. She had fainted, after frightful convulsions.

When she came to herself the abbé thought she was suffocating. "See," he said, "that grating intercepts light and air. Can we not give the poor woman a chance to breathe?"

Madame Hubert, forgetting everything, ran to a closet in the chimney, and took out a key with which she opened the grating.

"Ah!" said the abbé, "I was not aware that the grating could be thus opened with a key. Why in the world are such precautions needed?"

"It is the order," replied the keeper.

"Yes, I understand," said the abbé, significantly; "that window is only seven feet from the ground; it opens on the quay. Were prisoners to escape from your room they would find themselves at liberty without meeting either turnkey or sentinel."

"Precisely," said the keeper.

The abbé remarked that Madame de La Motte had heard and understood; that she had started even, and that she had raised her eyes to the closet, fastened only by a brass button, where the keeper deposited the key to the grating. That was all he wanted. His presence seemed no longer needed. He took leave; but coming back he said, "What a crowd there is in the square! All go with such eagerness in that direction that not a soul is left on the quay."

The keeper leaned out. "It is true," said he.

"Is it not thought," continued the abbé, speaking always as if Madame de La Motte could not hear him, — but she heard every word, — "is it not expected that the judg-

ment will be rendered during the night? That cannot be, — can it?”

“I do not imagine,” said the keeper, “that it will be rendered before to-morrow morning.”

“Well, then,” continued the abbé, “try to let that poor Madame de La Motte have a little rest; she must need it.”

“Let us withdraw to our chamber,” said the worthy keeper to his wife, “and leave Madame here in the easy-chair, — unless she prefers going to bed.”

Jeanne, on the point of rising, met the eye of the abbé, who was watching for her reply. She fell back, and feigned sleepiness. The abbé then retired, and the keeper and his wife also went out, after quietly locking the grating, and putting back the key in its place.

As soon as she was alone Jeanne opened her eyes. “The abbé advises me to flee,” she thought. “Could any one more clearly point out the necessity of flight, and the means? To threaten me with condemnation before judgment is rendered, is the act of a friend who urges me to recover my liberty. I have only to open that closet, then that grating, and I shall be on the deserted quay. To escape! Oh, liberty! — the joy of recovering my riches, of repaying to my enemies all that I have suffered!” She darted to the closet, seized the key, and drew near to the lock of the grating. Suddenly she thought she saw on the bridge the dark form of a man. “Some one is there,” she said to herself; “perhaps the abbé, awaiting my escape; he is ready to help me. Yes, but if it were a trap; if, descending to the quay, I should be surprised in the attempt to escape? Flight is confession of crime, — at least, of fear. Whence comes that man! He seems to be connected with Monsieur de Provence; but he may be an emissary of the queen, or of the Rohans. They would pay

heavily for a false move on my part — Yes, some one is there, watching ! To make me escape some hours before the judgment ! My God ! may it not be that my enemies have information of my acquittal ? Who knows but they wish to parry that terrible blow to the queen by a proof, or a confession of my guilt ? That proof, that confession, would be afforded by my flight ; I will remain.”

Jeanne from that moment remained convinced that she had escaped a snare. She smiled, and with a firm step went to the closet, and placed in it the key of the grating. Then drawing her arm-chair nearer to the window, she watched that man who waited for her, and who at length disappeared as the first rays of daylight enabled her to distinguish the water of the river from the river-banks.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE JUDGMENT.

ON the morning of the next day Jeanne awaited, with sanguine expectation, the news of her acquittal and release. She was not allowed to go out in search of information; but placing herself at the window she listened anxiously to the sounds from the neighboring square. Soon she heard a noisy outbreak of cries, bravos, and clapping of hands, — a noise which frightened her, for she could not imagine that it was for her that so much sympathy was declared.

"A fine day for the cardinal!" said a sort of attorney's clerk, as he passed by.

"For the cardinal!" Jeanne repeated. "There is news then that the cardinal is acquitted." She returned hastily to the hall. "Madame, Madame!" she said to the woman Hubert, "what is this I hear? — 'a fine day for the cardinal!' What is the meaning of that?"

"I do not know," replied Madame Hubert.

Jeanne looked at her steadily. "Ask your husband, I beg of you!" she said.

Madame Hubert did as requested, and her husband replied from without, "I do not know."

"What then," said Jeanne, impatiently, "could those passers-by mean? They of course were speaking with reference to the trial."

"Perhaps they meant," said the kind-hearted Hubert, "that if Monsieur de Rohan should be acquitted it would be a fine day for him."

"Do you think he will be acquitted?" cried Jeanne, clinching her hands.

"That may happen."

"I, also?"

"Oh, you, Madame, — you as well as he; why not?"

Jeanne returned to the window.

"I think you are wrong, Madame," said the keeper, "in thus exposing yourself to emotions arising from distorted information. Why not wait quietly till your counsel, or Monsieur Frémyn, arrives to read to you —"

"The judgment — No! no!" and she continued to listen.

A woman was passing with friends. "He shall have my bouquet," she cried, "and a hundred others, the dear man! Oh, if I can I will kiss him!"

"And I, too," said a companion.

"I would like to have him kiss me," said a third.

"Of whom can they be speaking?" thought Jeanne.

"He is a handsome man; you do not show bad taste," said another of the company, and they passed on.

"Still the cardinal!" murmured Jeanne. "He is acquitted! he is acquitted!"

"Eh, Madame!" said Hubert and his wife, speaking together, "why should you not wish a poor prisoner to be set free?"

Jeanne, unwilling to lose their sympathy, hastened to say, "You do not understand me. Can you believe me so wicked as to wish harm to my companions in misfortune? Oh, yes! may the cardinal be acquitted; but let me know at least what is decided in regard to me. Believe me, my friends, it is my impatience that makes me appear as I do."

Hubert and his wife looked at each other as if to measure the extent of the information they would impart. A flash of light from Jeanne's eyes stopped them as they were on the point of speaking.

"You tell me nothing?" she cried, perceiving her mistake.

"We know nothing," they replied, in a low tone.

At that moment Hubert was called out of the room. His wife, remaining alone with the captive, sought to divert her attention. But in vain. All Jeanne's intelligence was devoted to catching the sounds that came to her from without.

Suddenly there was a great noise in the square, accompanied by a tumultuous rush of the crowd. The shouts were continuous; they seemed to be directed toward a covered carriage drawn by two horses, which were so impeded by the crowd that they could move only slowly. The countess recognized the two men who were the objects of that enthusiasm. They were the Cardinal de Rohan and the Comte de Cagliostro.

That manifestation of public sympathy with the victims of the queen — for so they were called — inspired Jeanne with a transient joy. But then, "What!" said she, "they are already free, — and I, I know nothing! Why is it that I can learn nothing?" She shuddered.

Another noise of shouting drew her attention toward the Pont-au-Change. A carriage, surrounded by a multitude, was descending the hill toward the bridge. In the carriage Jeanne recognized Oliva, smiling and holding up her child, — Oliva, rejoicing in her freedom, and enjoying also the pleasantries addressed to her (a little free sometimes) and the kisses that were sent to the fresh-looking, attractive girl. On the bridge a post-chaise was waiting. In it Monsieur Beausire was hiding behind one of his friends,

who alone ventured to expose himself to the public admiration. The latter made a sign to Oliva, who alighted from her carriage, and getting into the post-chaise fell into the arms of Beausire, who almost stifled her in his embrace. and covered her with tears and kisses. Nor did he breathe freely until at Saint Denis they changed horses, without having been disturbed by the police.

Meantime Jeanne, seeing all these persons at liberty, happy, honored, asked why she alone received no news. "By what refinement of cruelty do they withhold from me that part of the judgment which concerns me?"

"Calm yourself, Madame," said Hubert, entering the room, — "calm yourself."

"It is impossible that you do not know. You know! you know! Tell me!"

"Madame —"

"If you are not a savage, tell me! You see how I suffer!"

"We are forbidden, Madame, to reveal judgments, the reading of which is the duty of the clerk of the courts."

"Why, then, it is so frightful that you do not dare to tell it!" cried Jeanne, in a transport of rage which alarmed the keeper.

"No," said he; "calm yourself, — calm yourself."

"Speak, then!"

"Will you be patient, and will you do nothing to compromise me?"

"I promise, I swear it, — speak!"

"Very well; Monsieur le Cardinal is acquitted."

"I know it."

"Monsieur de Cagliostro is discharged."

"I know it! I know it!"

"Mademoiselle Oliva is dropped from the accusation."

"Go on! go on!"

"Monsieur Reteau de Villette is condemned to the galleys."

"And I! and I!" cried Jeanne, in great excitement.

"Patience, Madame, patience. Is this what you promised me?"

"I am patient; come, speak! what of me?"

"Banishment!" said the keeper, in a low voice, turning away his eyes.

A flash of joy shone in the eyes of the countess, which she immediately extinguished. Then, with a loud cry, she pretended to faint, and fell into the arms of her friends.

"What then would have been the consequence," whispered Hubert to his wife, "if I had told her the truth?"

"Banishment!" thought Jeanne, while pretending she was ill, — "it is liberty, wealth, vengeance; it is all that I have hoped. I have won!"

CHAPTER LVII.

THE PUNISHMENT.

JEANNE was still awaiting the arrival of the clerk who, according to the keeper, would read the sentence pronounced against her. Released from the agony of suspense, she was saying to herself, "What matters it to me that Monsieur de Rohan has been adjudged less guilty than I? Do they punish me for a fault? No. Had I been duly recognized as a Valois; had I been able, like the cardinal, to hedge myself about with princes and dukes, — they would have refused nothing to the poor Comtesse de La Motte, and certainly would have spared the descendant of the Valois the disgrace of the stool of interrogation.

"But why occupy myself with the past, which is dead? Here ends the great business of my life. Banished! I am banished; that is to say, I can carry my million whither I will, and nothing can hinder me — young, beautiful, celebrated — from living as I please, either with my husband, if he too is banished (and I know that he is free), or with the friends that youth and fortune always provide.

"Let any one say to me, then, — to me the condemned; to me the banished; to me the disgraced, — that I am not richer than the queen, more honored, more fully acquitted. For she was not concerned for my condemnation; the earth-worm is of no consequence to the lion. She was concerned to have Monsieur de Rohan condemned, and Monsieur de Rohan is acquitted.

"Now how will they proceed to communicate to me my sentence, and have me conducted out of the kingdom? Will they revenge themselves on a woman by subjecting her to a strict execution of the law? Will they put me in the keeping of archers to be taken to the frontier? Will some one say to me solemnly, 'Unworthy one, the king banishes you from his kingdom'? No, my masters are good-natured; they wish me no harm. Their anger is directed against the good people of Paris who shout under their windows, 'Long live Monsieur le Cardinal!' 'Long live Cagliostro!' 'Long live the parliament!' Oh, yes; that is their real enemy, — the people. I counted on the moral support of public opinion, — and I have succeeded!"

At this point in her meditations a recollection of Reteau de Villette crossed her mind. "Poor fellow!" she said, with a wicked smile. "It is he who pays for all. Always some paltry soul is needed for expiation, and the emergency which calls it up devours it. Poor Reteau! The wretched creature now pays for his diatribes against the queen, and for his forgeries. God, who allots to every one his part in the world, appointed to him beatings, intermittent louis d'or, ambuscades, concealments, and at last the galleys. This is the fate of trickery without intelligence, of cunning without boldness, of aggression without perseverance and strength."

Jeanne took dinner with her keepers in a very happy state of mind; but they had wholly lost their cheerfulness; they did not even affect to conceal their embarrassment. Jeanne attributed this coldness to the condemnation pronounced against her, and said so to them. They replied that nothing was sadder to them than the sight of those against whom sentence had been pronounced.

Jeanne was so happy that she wished to be alone; and

she intended, after dinner, to retire at once to her chamber. She was agreeably surprised when Hubert said to her, with solemn constraint, "Madame, we are under orders not to keep with us persons who have been condemned by parliament."

"Good!" said Jeanne to herself; "he anticipates my wishes." She rose from the table. "I should not wish," she said, "to involve you in disobedience; that would be a poor return for all your kindness. I will therefore retire to my chamber."

She watched for the effect of these words. Hubert rolled a key in his fingers. His wife turned her head away, as if to hide her emotion.

"But," added the countess, "where will they come to read me my sentence; and when?"

"They are waiting, perhaps, till Madame shall be in her own room," Hubert hastened to say.

"Decidedly," thought Jeanne, "he sends me away." A vague feeling of anxiety troubled her for a moment, but was immediately dismissed.

Seeing that Jeanne was leaving, Madame Hubert went up to her quickly, and seized her hands, with an impulse of pity which did not escape the countess's observation. This time she felt something like fright, but this feeling also she easily banished from a soul full of joy and hope. Nevertheless, she would have liked to ask Madame Hubert for an explanation of her pity. She opened her mouth for that purpose; but Hubert took her hand, with more decision than politeness, and led her to the door.

The countess found in the corridor eight archers waiting, — she wondered for whom, or for what. In advance of the archers was the turnkey who every evening conducted her to her chamber. He went on before Jeanne, as if to show her the way.

"I am to return to my room?" asked the countess.

"Yes, Madame," replied the turnkey.

Jeanne took hold of the iron railing and ascended the stairs, preceded by the man. Reassured, she suffered herself to be locked in her chamber, and even thanked the turnkey, who immediately withdrew.

As soon as she was alone, Jeanne began to give vent to the joy she had so long concealed. Suddenly she heard steps in the corridor, the jingling of keys, a key in the lock of her door.

"What now?" thought she, lifting her head and listening.

The turnkey entered.

"What is it, Jean?" asked Jeanne, in her gentle, careless tone.

"Will Madame please to follow me?" said he.

"Whither?"

"Downstairs, Madame."

"Downstairs, — what do you mean?"

"To the office."

"For what, if you please?"

"Madame —"

Jeanne took a step toward him, as he hesitated, and then she saw, in the corridor, the archers whom she had noticed before. "Come," she said, with some agitation, "tell me why they summon me to the office."

"Madame, Monsieur Doillot your counsel is there, and wishes to see you."

"At the office? Why not here?"

"Madame, Monsieur Doillot has received letters from Versailles, which he wishes to communicate to you."

Jeanne failed to notice that this reply was no answer. "Letters from Versailles!" she said to herself, — "from the court! Has the queen, then, interceded for me? Is

it possible that — But why waste time in guessing, when in two minutes I can know the truth?" Then, to the turnkey, "Wait for me a moment while I arrange my dress."

"I will wait, Madame; but I beg you to consider that Monsieur Doillot has but little time to spare."

Jeanne closed the door, and in five minutes had completed her preparations, in such eager haste was she to receive the expected order for her departure. She followed the turnkey downstairs in the excitement of joyous anticipation; but instead of turning to the left, toward the office, the turnkey turned toward a small door at the right.

"Where are you going, then?" Jeanne asked. "The office is not there."

"Come, come, Madame," said the turnkey, in a coaxing manner, "this is the way to the place where Monsieur Doillot is awaiting you." He passed through in advance, drawing after him the prisoner, who heard the door close, and bolts on the outside pushed noisily to their places. She was surprised, but seeing no one in the darkness, hazarded no questions. She took two or three steps forward, and stopped. By aid of a faint light, penetrating an iron grating covered with spiders' webs and dust, she discovered that she was in a dungeon, alone with her conductor.

"Monsieur," she said, subduing her terror, "why are we here? Where is Monsieur Doillot, to whom you were to conduct me?"

The turnkey made no reply. He turned around as if to see whether the door by which they had entered was securely closed. Jeanne followed this movement with terror. The idea came to her that she had to do with one of those amorous jailers described in the romances of the period, who, when their prey is about to escape them, constitute

themselves tyrannic masters of the *fair captive*, and offer liberty in exchange for love.

Jeanne was strong, and had no fear of being taken by surprise; nor was she encumbered by modesty. She approached the turnkey, smiling, and said, "My friend, what do you want? Have you something to say to me? The time of a prisoner within reach of liberty is precious. It is an ugly sort of rendezvous you have selected for your conversation with me."

The turnkey did not understand her, and made no reply. He sat down and waited.

"But," said Jeanne, "I ask you again, why are we here?" She began to think the man was crazy.

"We are waiting for Monsieur Doillot," replied the turnkey.

Jeanne shook her head. "Monsieur has chosen badly his time and place for communicating to me the letters from Versailles. It is not possible that he should make me wait here. No; there is something else."

She had hardly spoken these words when a door, which she had not noticed, was opened in front of her. Beyond this door was an obscure passage, and beyond that Jeanne caught a momentary glimpse of an open place thronged with eager-looking men and women. Three men appeared at the door. Behind them Jeanne could see four bayonets. The three men entered the dungeon, and the door was closed.

Jeanne passed from surprise to surprise, — or rather, from anxiety to terror. Her name was called before she had recovered herself sufficiently to exclaim. He who called her name was the youngest of the three men. He was dressed in black, kept his hat on his head, and held in his hand a roll of papers. "You are, Madame," he said, "Jeanne de Saint-Remy de Valois, married to Marie Antoine Nicolas, Comte de La Motte?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"You were born at Fontette, July 22, 1756?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"You reside at Paris, in the Rue Saint Claude?"

"Yes, Monsieur; but why these questions?"

"Madame, I am sorry that you do not recognize me; I have the honor to be the clerk of the court."

"I recognize you."

"Then, Madame, I may perform the duty of my office, recognized by you."

"To what, if you please, does your official duty call you?"

"To read to you, Madame, the sentence pronounced against you by the court."

Jeanne shuddered. "You are," she said, "Breton the clerk; but who are these two gentlemen with you?"

The clerk was about to answer, when the turnkey, moved by pity or by apprehension, rushed to him and whispered, "Don't tell her!"

Jeanne heard him, and looked at those two men more attentively. Their aspect frightened her, and she recoiled.

The clerk went nearer to her, and said, "On your knees, Madame, if you please."

"On my knees!" cried Jeanne, — "on my knees! — I, a Valois, on my knees!"

"It is the order, Madame," said the clerk, bowing.

"But, Monsieur, one is obliged to kneel only after being sentenced to a degrading punishment, and banishment is not so regarded in the law of France."

"I have not told you, Madame, that you were condemned to banishment," said the clerk, in a tone of sadness.

"To what, then, am I condemned?" cried Jeanne.

"You will learn that by listening to the sentence, Madame; and you will first, if you please, kneel down."

"Never! never!"

"Madame, it is ordered that if the condemned refuses to kneel, force must be employed —"

"Force! — to a woman?"

"A woman has no more right than a man to fail in respect to the king and the law."

"And to the queen!" cried Jeanne, furiously, "for I recognize in this the hand of an angry woman."

"You are wrong in accusing the queen, Madame. She has nothing to do with the judgments of the court. Come, Madame, I entreat; spare us the necessity of violence. On your knees!"

"Never! never! never!"

The clerk made a sign to the two men who had entered with him, who thereupon seized Jeanne, and dragged her to the middle of the dungeon in spite of her cries and shrieks.

"It is useless to cry out in this way," said the clerk; "no one outside can hear you, and you cannot hear me read the sentence."

"Allow me to hear it standing, and I will listen in silence," said Jeanne, panting.

"Whenever a culprit is to be whipped," said the clerk, "the punishment —"

"Whipped!" shrieked Jeanne, — "whipped! Ah, you scoundrel, whipped!"

Her cries became so appalling that all the men, bewildered, thought only of meeting force by force; they threw themselves upon Jeanne, and forced her down. But she resisted victoriously; when they would place her in a kneeling posture, she made her muscles as stiff as steel, meanwhile inflicting serious wounds with her feet and hands. One of the men took hold of her feet, and held them as in a vice. Two others held her by the wrists, and all called on the clerk to read the sentence.

"I will never allow a sentence to be read that condemns me to infamy," cried Jeanne, struggling with superhuman strength; and she uttered such cries and shrieks that she could not hear a word of what was read to her. When she thought he had finished, she became silent, and sought to recover strength for a renewal of the struggle.

"And," calmly continued the clerk, "the sentence is to be executed, as usual, in the court-yard of the Palace of Justice."

"Publicly!" howled the unhappy woman. "Oh—"

"Monsieur de Paris," said the clerk, to one of the men with him, "I place this woman in your hands."

"Who, then, is that man?" asked Jeanne, in a last paroxysm of rage and terror.

"The executioner," said the clerk, bowing and readjusting his ruffles.

The two men took hold of Jeanne, and lifted her up to carry her toward the passage-way which she had seen when the door was opened. It is impossible to describe the resistance she made. That woman, who ordinarily would have fainted on receiving the slightest wound, sustained for nearly an hour the harsh treatment and the blows of the executioner and his assistant. She was dragged to the outer door without ceasing for a moment to utter the most frightful cries.

Beyond this door was the court-yard, to which a crowd of two or three thousand spectators had been drawn by the erection of the scaffold. From every direction cries arose, "Here she is! here she is!" together with epithets not complimentary to the condemned, and here and there remarks not very considerate of the judges. For Jeanne had calculated correctly; since her condemnation, fixing her attitude of hostility to the queen, a party had been formed in her favor.

But Monsieur de Crosne had taken his precautions. The front rows were occupied by spectators who were devoted to those who paid the expenses of the spectacle. The anger against the queen had been utilized in her favor; the supporters of the cardinal hooted Jeanne, who had separated her cause from his. So that on her appearance there were loud cries of, "Down with La Motte! down with the forger!"

Jeanne was almost at the end of her strength, but not at the end of her rage. In her clear, vibrating, metallic voice she launched a few words which, as if by enchantment, stilled the noisy murmurs. "Do you know who I am?" she said. "Do you know that I am of the blood of your kings? Do you know that in me they strike at, not a culprit, but a rival?—not a rival only, but an accomplice?"

Here she was interrupted by the cries of persons in Monsieur de Crosne's employment. But she had awakened curiosity, if not interest; and the curiosity of a mob is a thirst that must be assuaged. The silence proved to Jeanne that they wished to hear more.

"Yes," she repeated, "an accomplice! In me they punish one who knows the secrets of—"

"Be careful!" whispered the clerk.

She turned around. The executioner held a whip in his hand. "Mercy! mercy!" she cried, in a heart-rending tone.

The hootings of the crowd drowned her voice. Jeanne clung to the executioner's knees, and succeeded in getting hold of his hand; but he raised the other hand, and let the whip fall gently on the countess's shoulders. Strange to say, when she found that the executioner was sparing her, she rushed upon his assistant, and sought to overcome him, and throw herself from the scaffold. But sud-

denly she sprang back. This man held in his hand a red-hot iron which he had that moment withdrawn from a brazier. He raised this iron, and Jeanne started back with a wild cry. "Branded!" she exclaimed, — "branded!"

The mob replied by a terrible cry. "Yes! yes!" roared three thousand mouths.

"Help! help!" cried Jeanne, beside herself, trying to break the cords with which they had bound her hands.

Meantime the executioner was tearing, being unable to open, the dress of the countess, and while with a trembling hand he parted the torn material he tried to seize the hot iron offered by his assistant. But Jeanne rushed upon the assistant, making him draw back, for he did not dare to touch her; so that the executioner, unable to grasp the sinister implement, expected from the crowd some denunciation of himself. The multitude, excited, and beginning to admire that vigorous defence, manifested their impatience; the confusion became threatening.

"Make an end of it," cried a voice from the front ranks, — an imperious voice, which doubtless the executioner recognized; for by a mighty effort he threw Jeanne down, bending her nearly double, and with his left hand, inclining her head. She sprang up again, more heated than the iron with which she was threatened, and in a voice that rose above the tumult, "Cowardly Frenchmen!" she cried, "you do not defend me! You suffer me to be tortured!"

"Be silent!" said the clerk.

"Be silent!" said the commissary.

"Silent! Ah, yes!" replied Jeanne. "To what does silence bring me? Yes, I submit to the disgrace; it is my own fault."

"Ah! ah! ah!" cried the crowd, not understanding her meaning.

"Be silent!" repeated the clerk.

"Yes, my fault," said Jeanne, still struggling; "for if I had been willing to speak out —"

"Be silent!" roared the clerk, the commissary, and the executioners.

"Had I been willing to tell all I know about the queen, — well, I might have been hanged, but I should not have been dishonored."

She could say no more; for the commissary leaped upon the scaffold, followed by agents of the police who gagged the unhappy woman, and delivered her, palpitating, bruised, her face swollen, livid, bleeding, to the two executioners. One of these again bent down his victim, at the same time seizing the iron, which his assistant succeeded in handing to him. But Jeanne, like a serpent, eluded his grasp, and springing up once more, she turned with frenzied excitement toward the executioner, and offered her breast to him, defying him with her eyes. The fatal instrument which was aimed at her shoulder struck her on the right breast, marking its smoking and consuming furrow in the living flesh, and wringing from the victim, gagged as she was, one of those moans which have no equivalent in sounds produced by the human voice.

Jeanne was vanquished by the pain and shame; she fainted. The executioner took her on his shoulder, and with uncertain steps bore her down the ignominious ladder.

The multitude, silent, either because they approved or because they were filled with consternation, did not withdraw until the doors of the prison were closed once more upon the victim. Then they slowly retired, and the place resumed its ordinary tranquillity.

At the end of the bridge two men, young and thoughtless, conversed as follows, —

"Do you really believe, Maximilien, that it is Madame de La Motte whom the executioner has branded?"

"They say so, but I do not believe it," replied the taller of the two.

"No," said the other, a small man of vulgar appearance; "it is not Madame de La Motte whom they have branded. As they have found a Mademoiselle Oliva as a way of escape for the queen, so they have found a pretended Madame de La Motte to confess the forgery. You will say that she was branded, — bah, a farce for which the executioner and the victim were paid."

"It is a great deal to consent to be branded on the breast," replied the taller speaker. "The farce of which you speak seems to me not proved. You are more of a doctor than I, and you must have smelt the burning flesh."

"A mere matter of money, I tell you. They have paid some one who was condemned to be branded —"

"There, there," said he who had been called Maximilien, "I will not follow you on that ground; it is not solid."

"But you yourself said just now that you did not believe it was Madame de La Motte who had been branded."

"No; I still do not believe it," said the young man, smiling.

"Who was it then?"

"It was the queen," said the young man, in a sharp tone, to his sinister-looking companion; and he accented the words with his indescribable smile.

The other drew back, laughing explosively at the jest; then, looking around him, "Adieu, Robespierre," he said.

"Adieu, Marat," replied the other; and they separated.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE MARRIAGE.

AT noon of the same day the king came forth from his cabinet, and took his way to the square salon, in which already was the queen, surrounded by her little court. Marie Antoinette, pale beneath her rouge, listened with forced attention to the questions regarding her health addressed to her by Madame de Lamballe and Monsieur de Calonne. But she often glanced furtively at the door, — eagerly, as if desiring to see ; and timorously, as if afraid to see.

“The king !” cried one of the ushers.

Louis XVI. stood on the threshold, and his eyes sought, first of all, Marie Antoinette. She rose and advanced to meet the king, who gracefully kissed her hand. “You are wonderfully beautiful to-day, Madame,” said he.

She smiled sadly, and again searched vaguely among the throng.

“The bridal party have not yet arrived ?” asked the king.

“Sire,” replied the queen, with a violent effort at self-control, “Monsieur de Charny is here, and waits in the corridor till your Majesty shall order him to come in.”

“Charny is there ?” cried the king. “Let him come in at once.”

Some of the gentlemen withdrew to carry the order to Monsieur de Charny. The queen nervously placed her

hand on her heart, and sat down with her back to the door.

"Why, it is noon," said the king; "the bride should be here."

Monsieur de Charny appeared at the door in time to hear the king's words, to which he immediately replied, "Your Majesty will pardon the involuntary delay of Mademoiselle de Taverny. Since her father's death she has not left her bed. To-day she rises for the first time, and she would have been here already but for a fainting-fit by which she has been attacked."

"That dear child loved her father so much! Well, since she has found a good husband, let us hope that she will be consoled."

The queen listened in a motionless attitude, but the blood left her face to fill her heart.

"Monsieur de Breteuil," said the king, suddenly, "have you sent the order for Cagliostro's banishment?"

"Yes, Sire," replied the minister, with humility.

"And that La Motte, who calls herself Valois, — is she not to be branded to-day?"

"At this moment, Sire, it is probably done."

The queen's eyes sparkled; a murmur of forced approbation was heard in the salon.

"It will annoy Monsieur le Cardinal to know that his accomplice has been branded," continued the king, with a persistence in severity which was unusual with him. Having uttered that word "accomplice," applied to an accused person acquitted by the parliament, — a word that scourged the idol of the Parisians, and stigmatized as a thief and a forger one of the princes of the Church, one of the first noblemen in France, — the king, as if in supporting the honor of his wife he would send a solemn defiance to the clergy, to the nobles, to the parliaments, to

the people, looked around with eyes in which flamed that anger and that majesty which no one had seen in France since the eyes of Louis XIV. had closed in eternal sleep.

Not a murmur, not a word of assent responded to that vengeance which the king was taking on all who had conspired to dishonor the monarchy. He approached the queen, who held out both her hands with an expression of profound gratitude.

At this moment Mademoiselle de Taverney appeared, looking more like a ghost than a bride. Philippe held her by the hand. She advanced with quick steps, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, depending on her brother's guidance. Thus she approached the king. Philippe pressed her hand; she opened her eyes and saw Louis XVI. smiling upon her. She made a reverence, and a murmur of the spectators applauded her beauty.

"Mademoiselle," said the king, taking her hand, "they tell me you are suffering, and that afflicts me. But I must do what I can for the happiness of those who serve me as does Monsieur de Charny. Should you not marry him to-day I could not be present at the ceremony, since I set out to-morrow with the queen on a journey through France. Come with me to the queen, Mademoiselle, and thank her; for her Majesty has a strong affection for you." Thus speaking, he led Andrée to Marie Antoinette.

The queen, much agitated, could hardly raise her eyes; she saw only Andrée's marriage-robe.

"To the chapel, gentlemen," said the king, and all followed the king and queen.

The Mass was begun immediately. The queen listened with her head buried in her hands, and praying with all the strength of her soul.

Monsieur de Charny, pale and handsome, was as cool

and brave as in the midst of battle, but was suffering much more.

Philippe gave all his attention to his sister, trembling and tottering, and was ready to support her by word and gesture.

Andrée uttered no prayer; she formed no wishes. She had nothing to hope, nothing to fear. Henceforth she was nothing in the eyes of men, nothing to God. "Am I a Christian?" she asked herself. "Am I like other persons? Hast thou appointed me to a righteous life, — thou, who art called the sovereign Arbiter? Thou hast always punished me, who have never sinned. Thou hast provided that I should have for a mortal enemy the only man whom I have loved! No; the things of this world and the laws of God do not concern me; doubtless I was cursed before my birth. It is very strange. Here is a man the sound of whose name alone would make me die of happiness. Had he come to ask me for myself, I should have been obliged to kneel at his feet, and beg his pardon for *my fault of other days*, — for thy fault, my God; and he perhaps would have repulsed me. And now this man marries me; and it is he who will beg for pardon on his knees. It is strange, strange indeed."

The ceremony concluded, the assembled party congratulated the newly married couple. The Admiral de Suffren, on the return from the chapel, took Andrée's hand, and in Olivier's name promised her the happiness she so much deserved. Andrée thanked the admiral, and begged him to conduct her to the king that she might thank him.

Charny followed at a distance, without daring to approach her.

The admiral crossed the grand salon, and conducted Andrée to the king, who kissed her on the forehead and

said, "Madame la Comtesse, go to the queen; she has a nuptial present for you."

Having spoken these words, which seemed to him very gracious, the king withdrew, followed by the court, leaving the young bride despairing in Philippe's arms.

"Oh," she murmured, "it is too much! It is too much, Philippe! I thought that I had already endured enough."

"Courage!" said Philippe, in a low tone. "Only this one trial more, sister."

"No, no," said Andrée; "I cannot. If *she* speaks to me, if *she* congratulates me, I shall die."

"You will die if you must, my dear sister; and in that you will be happier than I."

Philippe uttered these words so sadly that Andrée, as if stimulated by a goad, rushed forward and entered the library, where the queen, notwithstanding the season, — for it was the month of June, — was sitting by a fire.

Andrée remained standing, trembling with anger and with weakness too, and waited for the word which should strike her to the heart.

A minute — a century — elapsed before the queen made any motion. Then she rose, leaning on the chair, and with trembling fingers took a paper from the table. She advanced toward Andrée, and without speaking, placed the paper in her hands.

Between these two hearts speech was superfluous. Andrée took the paper, and read it. It was as follows: —

Andrée, you have saved me. My honor is preserved by you; my life is yours. In the name of that honor, which costs you so much, I declare to you that you may call me your sister. Try me; you will not see me blush. I intrust you with this paper, — it is the pledge of my gratitude; it is the dowry

which I give you. Your heart is noble ; it will be able to appreciate the present I bestow on you.

MARIE ANTOINETTE DE LORRAINE D'AUTRICHE.

Andrée looked at the queen. She saw her eyes moistened with tears, as with drooping head she awaited a response. She slowly crossed the room, placed in the fire the queen's note, and bowing profoundly, but still without speaking, she passed out of the library. Marie Antoinette made a movement to stop her, to follow her ; but the inflexible countess, leaving the door open, went to rejoin her brother in the salon.

Philippe called Charny, took his hand and placed it in that of Andrée, while on the threshold of the library behind the portière, which she held aside with her arm, the queen witnessed the painful scene.

Charny withdrew like the bridegroom of Death carried off by his livid bride, — looking back at the pale face of Marie Antoinette, who, as she thought, saw him disappearing forever.

At the gate of the palace two travelling-carriages were waiting. Andrée got into the first, and as Charny prepared to follow her, "Monsieur," she said, "you are, I believe, setting out for Picardy."

"Yes, Madame."

"And I am going to the place in the country where my mother died. Adieu." Charny bowed without replying. Andrée departed alone.

"Have you remained to tell me that you are my enemy?" said Olivier to Philippe.

"No, Monsieur ; you are not my enemy, since you are my brother-in-law."

Olivier offered his hand, got into the second carriage and departed.

Philippe, left alone, wrung his hands in the agony of

despair, and said in a voice choked by emotion, "My God, for those who do their duty on the earth, dost thou reserve some little joy in heaven? Joy!" he exclaimed, looking once more toward the palace, "I speak of joy! Those only can look with hope to the future life who there will meet with hearts who love them. No one here below loves me; I have not even the happiness of wishing to die."

Thereupon he cast his eyes aloft, without bitterness, but with the mild reproach of a Christian soul whose faith is wavering, and disappeared, as Charny had done and Andrée, amid the first blasts of a storm which was to uproot a throne, and involve in its ruin so many worldly honors and so many human passions.

THE END.

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